

HILLSDALE COUNTY TRIAL COURTS LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

1ST Circuit Court Administrative Order 2013-02
2-B District Court Administrative Order 2013-05
Probate Court Administrative Order 2013-02

In accordance with Supreme Court Administrative Order 2013-8, the court establishes this Language Access Plan (LAP) to provide for the language access needs of court users.

This LAP is the plan for the court to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). A limited English proficient person is a person who does not speak English as his or her primary language, and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English, and by reason of his or her limitations, is not able to understand and meaningfully participate in the court process.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and effective language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the court.

The court has appointed a language access coordinator to be a contact person for the public, court staff, and SCAO concerning this plan and its implementation. The language access coordinator may be contacted through the court administrator's office.

IT IS ORDERED:

Section I. Needs Assessment

A. Census Data

The court will make every effort to provide service to all LEP persons in the court's service area. The following list shows the non-English languages most frequently spoken in the court's physical jurisdiction.

1. Spanish: 111 individuals within a county population of 43,491 or .26% of the population_
2. German: 113 Amish individuals within a county population of 43,491 or .26% of the population._____

B. Court Experience

Based on court usage, the following list shows other non-English languages spoken in the court and not reflected in the US Census data. None_

C. Identification of LEP Persons

Court staff use the following methods to identify LEP persons:

- “I Speak cards have been distributed to each court and the local attorneys to enable court and legal staff to identify an LEP person and determine the language he/she speaks. Staff and attorneys will be directed to contact the court administrator upon determination of the need for an interpreter. The court administrator shall arrange for the interpreter.
- In-person and telephone requests from friends/family members of a LEP person seeking assistance for pending or anticipated court matters.

Section II. Language Assistance Resources

A. Interpreters Used In the Courtroom

The court will offer assistance to LEP persons in the courtroom by providing foreign language interpreters as required by Michigan Court Rule 1.111.

B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The court will take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. This is one of the most challenging situations facing court staff, because in most situations they will encounter LEP persons without an interpreter present. LEP persons may come in contact with court personnel via:

- The Hillsdale County Clerk’s Office where most civil cases are commenced.
- Circuit, Probate and District Court Clerk’s offices.
- Circuit, Probate and District Court Probation Departments
- Friend of the Court receptionist
- At the behest of local attorneys to whom a LEP person has made contact for assistance.

Court staff will consult with the court’s language access coordinator to determine what type of language service should be made available, based on the nature and importance of the court service to be provided and resources available. Upon determination of the language needed, the court’s language access coordinator shall contact the applicable court administrator for the purpose of arranging interpreter services. The following language services are available:

- “I Speak” cards have been distributed to each of the courts, county clerk, Friend of the Court and the local attorneys.
- Language assistance signs posted at public entrances, directing to clerk’s offices.
- Contact shall be made by the court administrator with LanguageLine, <https://www.language.com> or the Hillsdale College Language Department to arrange for immediate interpreter services.

C. Service Referrals

The court will make reasonable efforts to ensure that a non-federally funded entity to which the court refers LEP persons for services has provisions for addressing their needs. The court will consider viable alternatives if language access is not provided by such a non-federally funded entity.

D. Forms & Documents

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) makes select translated forms available to the courts at <http://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/Forms/Pages/default.aspx>.

- Additional translated forms available to court users include:
Rights of Arraignment – District Court for Spanish

The Hillsdale County courts have no frequently encountered languages. “I Speak” cards are available. Requests for language assistance are rare. When persons present themselves needing assistance with forms, court staff will initially check the SCAO website to determine if the form is printed in the requested language and print the form for the person. If forms are not available in a needed language, court staff will offer assistance by contacting an applicable interpreter that is listed on the SCAO website for that specific language.

When in-person interpreters are hired for court proceedings, they are expected to provide sight interpretation of documents for LEP persons.

Section III. Training

The court is committed to training its judges and court staff, and coordinating with county clerks on providing LEP persons with meaningful access to court services. The court will train court, clerk and Friend of the Court staff regarding the use of “I Speak” cards and foreign language court forms that are available. When the court provides additional training sessions, it will include a component addressing LEP policy and procedure and the court’s LAP. The court is aware that staff members having contact with the public are more likely to need in-depth training on LEP policy and procedure.

The court will work with SCAO and MJI to ensure that all employees are trained on LEP policy and procedure. Training will be offered to assist judges and staff to: identify and respond to LEP persons, increase awareness of the types of language services available, guide when and how to access those services, and effectively use language services.

The court shall provide to the judges, court staff, probation staff, Friend of the Court staff and county clerk staff the following training regarding language access:

- How to use “I Speak” cards and where to display them
- How to access the court’s Administrative Order for language access. (A copy will be available with each court administrator, each probation department, the Friend of the Court and the county clerk’s office.)
- Identification of the language access coordinator for each court and instructions about arranging appropriate language services through each court administrator.

Section IV. Public Notification and Evaluation of Language Access Plan

A. Language Access Plan Approval and Notification

The court's LAP has been approved by the State Court Administrative Office. The court will post its LAP on its public website (if available) or public notification area within the courthouse and will make copies of the LAP available upon request.

The court consulted with the following members of the community in creating its LAP.

- Hillsdale College
- Hillsdale Community Health Center
- Hillsdale Public Schools
- Jonesville Public Schools
- Hillsdale County Road Commission
- Hillsdale City Manager
- Jonesville Village President
- Hillsdale County Intermediate School District

B. Evaluation and Review of the LAP

At the direction of SCAO, or on its own initiative, the court will assess whether the LAP needs updating. The LAP will remain in effect unless modified or updated. Review of the following areas may indicate a need to update the LAP:

- Number of LEP persons requesting court interpreters or language assistance
- Funding provided or available for languages services
- Current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided
- Feedback from LEP communities within the county
- Feedback from trainings provided by the court or SCAO/MJI
- Viability of identified language services and resources
- Problem areas and corrective action strategies
- Updated census data

Every request/instance of language assistance will be transmitted to the language access coordinator by court staff. The coordinator will compile the data on an annual basis for budget purposes and review the bullet list above for feedback from the community, in order to address any need to modify the LAP.

The language access coordinator for this court ensures this plan is followed, advises the court on potential updates to this plan, and coordinates the language access needs for the court as they arise. The court has identified the name and contact information of the language access coordinator and advised the State Court Administrative Office. The court will notify the SCAO regional office of any changes to the language access coordinator's contact information, of if a new language access coordinator is named. The court will update the appointment if the need should arise.

Date: 12/15/13

Chief Judge  SCAO Approval Date: _____

Date: 1/15/13

District Court Judge 

Date: 4/15/13

Probate Court Judge 