



metropolitan boston | housing partnership

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## **MBHP Language Assistance Plan (LAP) Policies and Procedures**

### **I. Definitions**

A Language Assistance Plan (LAP) is the official policies and procedures used by an agency to better serve and meet the needs of clients whose primary language is other than English. An LAP identifies the languages, other than English, that are statistically most commonly spoken in its service area. The LAP then outlines how best to serve and do outreach to those language communities.

### **II. Methodology**

MBHP uses the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Guidelines developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop the policies, procedures and demographic determination to prepare its LAP. MBHP used the Four Point Analysis methodology as outlined in the Guidelines. The four points are:

1. Number or proportion of the population in the service area
2. The frequency of contact with the agency
3. Determination of the importance of the service/benefit
4. Available resources

### **III. Identified Primary Languages in MBHP Service Area (9/1/09)**

1. Spanish
2. Haitian Creole
3. Portuguese
4. Chinese (Mandarin & Cantonese)
5. Cape Verdean Creole
6. Vietnamese
7. Italian
8. Khmer

### **IV. Policy**

A person, whose language is other than English, can request that oral interpretation or translation of vital documents be provided to create equal access and opportunity to all MBHP programs and projects. Vital documents are defined by HUD as "... any document that is critical for ensuring meaningful access to the recipients' major activities and programs by beneficiaries generally and LEP persons specifically." MBHP will provide this access in the following ways:

1. Prioritize the hiring of multi-lingual staff who are fluent in the primary languages identified by MBHP.

2. MBHP will develop informal and formal agreements with other organizations to provide oral interpretation on a volunteer basis to address the needs of its clients.
3. In crisis situations, with supervisory approval, MBHP staff may use a telephonic oral interpretation service.
4. "I Speak" cards will be available at the Front Desk in the lobby to provide a systematic procedure for clients and visitors to identify which language they speak.
5. Vital documents will be translated into the primary languages other than English identified by MBHP demographic statistical analysis.
6. MBHP will review its outreach efforts to ensure that they are reaching the language communities that are identified in the LAP.
7. All MBHP staff will be trained on the LAP implementation.

#### V. Procedure

1. MBHP multilingual staff will be available for oral interpretation on an as needed basis for clients requesting this assistance
2. A list of MBHP multilingual staff will be updated quarterly and made available to all staff through the agency intranet as well as in the Fair Housing folder on the "G" drive.
3. Each MBHP Program will make available their vital documents translated into the identified primary languages for their staff. These documents will be made available electronically and in hard copy versions.
4. All applicants, clients and visitors will be presented with an "I Speak" card upon their arrival.
5. Once an MBHP client has identified a preference for LAP assistance, staff will make the necessary arrangements for oral interpretation and provision of the translated vital documents.

#### VI. Implementation

1. A copy of this policy, translated into the identified primary languages, will be posted in all public and common use areas.
2. Copies of this policy, translated into the identified primary languages, will be provided to all applicants/participants at every stage of interaction with MBHP.
3. An LAP policy statement and agency procedures will be provided in all agency materials
4. LAP policy statement and procedures will be included in all workshop folders.
5. "I Speak" cards will be given to all MBHP staff.
6. Technical assistance on providing language assistance can be requested of the Fair Housing Manager