

Interpretation and Translation for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Residents of North Dakota speak over 100 languages and dialects other than English~

The top 7! Spanish Nepali Somali Swahili Chuukese Arabic Ukrainian

Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Child Nutrition Program (CNP) sponsors receiving federal reimbursement for meals are required to provide **meaningful access** to programs for children from households with limited English proficiency (LEP). This includes translating **vital documents** when necessary to ensure that individuals with LEP can understand and engage with the services provided.

Meaningful access is free, competent, and timely.

Vital documents are documents that are critical for accessing services.

- Applications
- Consent Forms
- Verification notices
- Instructions
- Notices of Rights
- Documents requiring a response

Use the “Four-Factor” approach to determine interpretation and translation needs!

- 1) Demographics** Number of LEP individuals in your area
- 2) Frequency of Contact** How often LEP individuals interact with your school or program
- 3) Nature of Service** Importance of the service provided, e.g., healthcare, legal rights, food access
- 4) Resources*** Availability of resources to provide translations

***A shortage of resources or anticipated costs does NOT eliminate the requirement to provide language services.**

Translated Meal Applications and Verification Information

Free and Reduced Meal Applications are essential NSLP program documents and available in 49 languages. Click on the language needed and select ‘Prototype Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals’. Translated instructions and a Parent Letter are also available.



For Verification Notices and other forms in the 49 languages, click ‘Prototype Household Letters for State and Local Agencies’ to find:

- Verification Selection Notice (We Must Check Your Application)
- Verification Results (We Have Checked Your Application)
- Notice to Households of Approval or Denial of Benefits
- Notice of Direct Certification

USDA “I Speak” language identification card



This resource helps to identify the primary language of a person with LEP by using a short phrase translated into 49 different languages. Displaying the USDA “I Speak” poster in a visible location also lets LEP individuals know that interpretation services are available if needed.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about LEP Needs:

1) How do I know which languages are in my area?

School districts are required to ask language questions ([Home Language Survey](#)) for newly enrolling students. Ask your school to add questions for parents/guardians about their language interpretation or translation needs. You can also access US Census information at data.census.gov, or contact NDDPI CNFD for assistance finding English Learner language data within the STARS (State Automated Reporting System). Finally, displaying the 'I Speak' poster can also help identify languages in your area.



2) Where can I find bilingual interpreters?



Ask bilingual staff at your school or in your community if they are willing to assist with interpretation or translation needs. Simultaneous interpretation can be challenging, so don't assume willingness or bilingual ability. There are also many [interpretation and translation providers available](#). Remember to follow your state and/or district procurement policies.

3) I don't think our area has many LEP individuals. Do we need interpreters?

It depends. Perhaps there are not many LEP families in your area, or perhaps they are not approaching you because language is a barrier. It is better to have interpretation services ready and available for vital communications or emergencies. It is okay to start small or collaborate with others in your area. Many providers only charge you if the services are used. Remember: it is not acceptable to require an LEP individual to provide their own interpreter, whether a professional, family member, or friend, and children should never act as interpreters for their parents/guardians.

4) Who should know how to access interpreters? Frontline staff who encounter the public in their daily duties should be regularly trained on LEP communication procedures. Others in your school, such as administrators, counselors, secretaries, teachers, and social workers, may also benefit because they also communicate with students' parents/guardians.

5) Do I need to translate my district's webpage? Your school or program's website contains a vast amount of information, and it is often vital for parents and families. Consider prioritizing translation services for your webpages. Make them easy to locate and navigate. Webpages should be available in Spanish and other top languages in your area.

6) Can I use free web-based or AI translation tools, e.g., Google Translate, Microsoft Suite, or Chat GPT? It is best practice to avoid free web-based or AI-based translation tools for vital documents. These tools may be free, but a mistranslation or error could prevent someone from accessing your program. However, these tools can be helpful for day-to-day translation needs or other non-vital communication. AI translation can be used for docs, PDFs, emails, presentations, surveys, and more!

7) Where can I find additional references and resources?

The NDDPI Child Nutrition and Food Distribution website includes additional resources related to Limited English Proficiency and Civil Rights. These resources can be found under "Training" in the "School Nutrition Program (SNP)" sidebar.

