

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

January 23, 2017

On August 11, 2000, President William Clinton signed Executive Order No. 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency,” to clarify Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The purpose of the Executive Order was to “... improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency” Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient (“LEP”). The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“RIDE”) has developed this Language Access Plan (“Plan”) to promote access to agency services, programs, and activities for persons who have limited English proficiency.

RIDE implements policies adopted by the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education and fulfills a range of responsibilities under state and federal education laws to improve teaching and learning in the state's public elementary and secondary schools, including charter schools and career-technical schools. In doing so, RIDE primarily interacts with public school educators and staff. By regulation, public school educators must be able to “read, write, and speak the English language with sufficient competence to allow him or her to effectively teach students and prepare these students for success in required local and state assessments and evaluations.” Public school educators therefore have language access to all of RIDE’s data, services, programs and activities.

Rhode Island public schools use a home language survey developed by RIDE as part of their effort to identify LEP students. The most recent data, school year 15-16, from the surveys show a first language other than English ranges from one in each of 21 languages to a high of 7,344 in Spanish. The next highest language group is Portuguese with 226, followed by Arabic with 156. In the 15-16 school year, RI had 139,639 public school students.

An assessment of the proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served was conducted using the American Community Survey data from 2010. This survey indicated that 94.73% of the Rhode Island population spoke English. The table and charts appended to this plan characterize the variety of languages that make up the other 5.27% of the population.”

Accordingly, Spanish is the language that RIDE will address as the constituent group of families which may have limited English proficiency. RIDE actually provides language services and materials beyond Spanish in a number of its program areas.

RIDE's Language Access Coordinator is:

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In order to provide meaningful access to RIDE services, programs and activities, RIDE will ensure that it communicates effectively with the public. In order to do so, RIDE will translate vital documents into Spanish and, when necessary, provide interpreters for Spanish-speaking individuals when they call or visit RIDE. Approved vendors providing translation services are available on the state's Master Price Agreement. Translated documents will be made available on RIDE's website.

RIDE has staff members who speak a number of languages other than English, including Spanish. These individuals were not hired to perform their work in a language other than English or to serve as interpreters. Consequently, their fluency in languages other than English and their competency to be interpreters have not been formally evaluated. These staff, on an informal and infrequent basis as needed, will provide interpretation services to Spanish-speaking individuals who call or visit RIDE. If necessary, RIDE will utilize a professional interpreter service.

The following documents, appended to this Plan, have been translated into Spanish for distribution:

- Household Letter 2017
- RI Meal Benefit Application
- How to Apply for Free and Reduced
- MBA Additional Documents

The following documents, appended to this Plan, have been translated into Portuguese for distribution:

- RI Meal Benefit Application

In addition, RIDE makes its schools and districts aware of the USDA site on which translations for key documents have been made available for use.

RIDE will post the Plan on its website. A notice of available language services will be posted in RIDE's public reception area. RIDE staff will be informed of the Plan by an all-RIDE email

from the Commissioner's office. The Language Access Coordinator will conduct training with all RIDE staff that interacts with the public. The Plan will be included in the orientation process for new employees. Copies of the Plan shall be made available to the public upon request.

The Language Access Coordinator will periodically review the Plan and assess the need to make revisions. The Coordinator will discuss the Plan's implementation with RIDE's upper management on an annual basis. The Coordinator will participate, as appropriate, in the adoption of new major RIDE initiatives to coordinate their implementation with the Plan.

Individuals who believe they have been denied the benefits of the Plan may file a complaint with the Language Access Coordinator. Written, signed complaints must be filed within 6 months of the denial.