



Services to Customers with Limited English

Proficiency

Standard 318

Workforce Solutions is committed to serving residents seeking fulfilling employment. Workforce Solutions will ensure that language is not a barrier to service.

Background and Intent

Many languages are spoken in the Gulf Coast region. Many residents who speak one or more foreign languages are also proficient in English. A significant number of residents, however, are not proficient in English. Preliminary Census 2000 estimates indicate that there are at least 1.36 million residents above the age of five who speak a foreign language in the Gulf Coast region, and that over half of these residents speak English “less than well”.

The majority of residents in the Gulf Coast region with limited English proficiency speak Spanish as their primary language. There are also areas of the region in which other languages, such as Vietnamese, are commonly spoken. A much smaller portion of Gulf Coast residents speak other languages.

Directives from the U.S. Departments of Justice, Labor and Health and Human Services require that those who provide services to customers using federal funds take reasonable steps to provide equal access to persons with limited English proficiency. Exclusions, delays, or denials from services based on language barriers could be determined to constitute discrimination on the basis of National Origin, in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Workforce Solutions is committed to serving all customers in a language in which they are proficient.

Implementation Guidelines

- Career offices will be responsible for identifying commonly spoken languages by their customer bases. This information can be obtained from local schools in the career office’s service area, as well as through contacts with community based organizations. By January 31 of each year, each career office shall report to Rebecca Leppala at Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast Workforce Board any large (5,000) population of potential customers with limited English proficiency located in the offices’s service area.
- Because Spanish is the predominant language used by residents with limited English proficiency, career office operators will ensure that staff bilingual in Spanish or staff interpreters will be available to assist customers. If a career office serves a significant customer base that speaks a language other than Spanish, the career office manager will ensure that bilingual staff or staff interpreters are available to help these customers as

well. Staff designated as bilingual staff or staff interpreters shall avail themselves of all training made available by Workforce Solutions –Gulf Coast Workforce Board to ensure that these staff use adequate cultural sensitivity and have the interpretation skills needed for professional level interpretation.

- Career office managers shall identify and use community-based interpreters who may be available at little or no cost.
- Workforce Solutions will adopt uniform translations of commonly used documents in Spanish and Vietnamese. Office staff shall use these uniform documents in assisting Spanish-speaking customers.
- Each career office shall offer customers an opportunity to indicate which language they speak through the use of a poster, a set of “I speak” cards, or another reasonable method. (An example of “I speak” cards is attached.)
- When career office staff are serving a customers with limited English proficiency, they will inform customers that interpretation is available at no charge to them.
- Under no circumstances will Workforce Solutions staff require or suggest that a customer provide his own interpreter or require or suggest that a customer use a family member as a translator.

Monitoring

H-GAC will review contractors and career offices periodically to determine if career offices are complying with this standard. This standard will be used in review of an office’s application for full-service status. Failure to meet this standard will prevent an office from receiving full-service certification.

Attachments: Limited English Proficiency Plan
Regional Statistics
Example of “I Speak” Cards