

### **Standard**

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. According to the 2005 – 2009 American Community Survey, approximately 1.85 million residents in the Gulf Coast region speak a foreign language and about 48% of them speak English “less than very 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 center shall report to Brandalyn Patton at Workforce Solutions – Gulf Coast Workforce Board any large (5,000) population of potential customers with limited English proficiency located in the center’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 the cultural sensitivity and interpretation skills needed for professional level interpretation.

- Because there are a significant number of languages that are not widely spoken but which may be the language of choice of some customers, the Board shall procure other interpretation services. When appropriate, career office staff shall use these services to ensure customers are served in the language in which they are most comfortable. Career offices will be charged for services based on actual usage.
- Career center 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 center 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 customer 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.

Attachments: Limited English Proficiency Plan

<http://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/crc/ISpeakCards.pdf>