Serving Limited English Proficient Clients

A Procedure Manual for LASMNY Intake Staff and Advocates

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SERVING WALK-INS

When serving walk-ins, the goal is to provide the same services, information and referrals as we would provide to the English-speaking public, in the same amount of time if at all possible. This is true whether the walk-in ultimately turns out to be eligible for our services or not. When in doubt, ask yourself what services, information or referrals you would provide to an English-speaking person in the same situation. Then make sure the Limited English Proficient person gets that same service, information or referrals.

Procedure for serving Limited English Proficient walk-ins:

1. <u>Determine whether the person is Limited English Proficient</u>. If a person speaks English less than very well, consider him or her Limited English Proficient. Even if the person knows some English, this does not mean he or she can understand enough to receive the full benefit of our services, information or referrals without help from an interpreter. If the person is Limited English Proficient, go to Step 2.

2. <u>Identify the person's language</u>. The Limited English Proficient person may be able to tell you the name of his or her language. If not, take the Limited English Proficient person over to the "Language Help" center that should be posted prominently in each office's reception area. Have the person look through the languages posted, and see if he or she is able to point to his or her language. If the person cannot find his or her language on the list, or cannot read, call our telephone interpreting service (LLE Link) at 1-800-234-0780. Enter our access code and press “0” for the operator. The operator will help you determine what the person's language is.

3. <u>Provide in-house or telephone interpreting services immediately to determine why the person has visited the office</u>. If there is an approved in-house interpreter for the person's language (see list of in-house interpreters in Appendix A), make use of that interpreter in person or by telephone. If you use the telephone, put the interpreter on speakerphone (make sure, of course, that the client's privacy is adequately protected by going into an office and closing the door if necessary). If there is no approved in-house interpreter, use our telephone service (LLE Link). To do this, call the service at 1-800-234-0780 and enter our access code. Then, enter the code for the language you need (see list of language codes in Appendix B). You will be connected with an interpreter within a few minutes. Put the interpreter on speakerphone.

4. <u>Using the interpreter, determine what level of services, information or referrals we can provide</u>. If we cannot accept the client's case because of LSC restrictions, office priorities or any other reason, explain this to the client using the interpreter. Use the interpreter to provide the client with the same information or referrals that you would provide to an English-speaking walk-in. If you hand out brochures, make sure they are in the person’s language if possible (see current list of available multilingual brochures in Appendix C; see your LEP contact person to

order copies). English brochures should be accompanied by a multilingual insert explaining the right to have the brochure read to the person in his or her language (see copy in Appendix D).

5. <u>If the person is accepted for services, use the interpreter to help the client fill out the intake information form and schedule a follow-up appointment with an advocate</u>. If the client will receive an in-person appointment with an advocate, call the appropriate in-house interpreter or approved local interpreting service to schedule an interpreter to be present at the appointment (see list of approved in-house and community interpreters in Appendix A). If the client needs emergency services, use the telephone interpreter to help you provide the services.

6. <u>What if there are no approved interpreters available locally for the client's appointment with the advocate?</u> Some clients may speak a rare language for which no approved interpreters are available in the community. If this is the case, the advocate should use the telephone interpreting service at the appointment, putting the interpreter on speakerphone.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Untrained interpreters, such as family members, friends and caseworkers, may not be used. If the client insists on using the untrained interpreter, note this in the client's file and provide an approved interpreter as back-up to ensure accurate communication. *Under no circumstances may a person under age 18 serve as an interpreter, even if the client insists.* Inform the client that for liability purposes, it is our agency policy not to use child interpreters.

Interpreters not on the approved list must submit credentials and training background to the Executive Director and receive approval before being used.

SERVING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PEOPLE
WHO CALL IN FOR SERVICES

When serving call-ins, the goal is to provide the same services, information and referrals as we would provide to the English-speaking public, in the same amount of time if at all possible. This is true whether the call-in ultimately turns out to be eligible for our services or not. When in doubt, ask yourself what services, information or referrals you would provide to an English-speaking person in the same situation. Then make sure the Limited English Proficient person gets that same service, information or referrals.

Procedure for serving Limited English Proficient call-ins:

1. <u>Determine whether the person is Limited English Proficient</u>. If a person speaks English less than very well, consider him or her Limited English Proficient. Even if the person knows some English, this does not mean he or she can understand enough to receive the full benefit of our services, information or referrals without help from an interpreter. If the person is Limited English Proficient, go to Step 2.

2. <u>Identify the person's language</u>. The Limited English Proficient person may be able to tell you the name of his or her language. If not, ask the client to hold for an interpreter. Try to get a callback number first in case you lose the call (if the call is lost, dial *69 to get the client’s callback number). Put the client on hold, call our telephone interpreting service (LLE Link) at 1-800-234-0780, enter our access code and press “0” for the operator. Conference the client back in using the conference feature on your phone. The operator will help you determine what the person's language is.

3. <u>Provide telephone interpreting services immediately to determine why the person has called the office</u>. If there is an approved in-house interpreter for the person's language (see list of in-house interpreters in Appendix A), ask the client to hold for an interpreter. Try to get a callback number first in case you lose the call (if the call is lost, dial *69 to get the client’s callback number). Put the client on hold, dial the in-house interpreter’s extension, and conference the client back in using the conference feature on your phone.

   If there is no approved in-house interpreter, use our telephone service (LLE Link). To do this, ask the client to hold for an interpreter. Try to get a callback number first in case you lose the call (if the call is lost, dial *69 to get the client’s callback number). Put the client on hold, call the service at 1-800-234-0780 and enter our access code. Then, enter the code for the language you need (see list of language codes in Appendix B). You will be connected with an interpreter within a few minutes. Then, conference the client back in using the conference feature on your phone.

4. <u>Using the interpreter, determine what level of services, information or referrals we can provide</u>. If we cannot accept the client's case because of LSC restrictions,

office priorities, or any other reason, explain this to the client using the interpreter. Use the interpreter to provide the client with the same information or referrals that you would provide to an English-speaking walk-in. If you mail out brochures, make sure they are in the person's language if possible (a current list of available multilingual brochures is included in Appendix C; see your LEP contact person to order copies). English brochures should be accompanied by a multilingual insert explaining the right to have the brochure read to the person in his or her language (see copy in Appendix D).

5. <u>If the person is accepted for services, use the interpreter to help the client fill out the intake information form and schedule a follow-up appointment with an advocate</u>. If the client will receive an in-person appointment with an advocate, call the appropriate in-house interpreter or approved local interpreting service to schedule an interpreter to be present at the appointment (see list of approved in-house and community interpreters in Appendix A). Using an in-house or interpreter or our phone service, call the client back to confirm the appointment time.

6. <u>If the client needs emergency services, use the in-house or telephone interpreter to help you provide the services</u>.

7. <u>What if there are no approved interpreters available locally for the client's follow-up appointment with the advocate?</u> Some clients may speak a rare language for which no approved interpreters are available in the community. If this is the case, the advocate should use the telephone interpreting service (LLE Link) at the appointment, putting the interpreter on speakerphone.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION WITH CLIENTS

Limited English Proficient clients need approved interpreters at initial appointments, follow-up appointments, hearing preps, and any other point at which they communicate verbally with an advocate. The goal is to ensure that a Limited English Proficient client can understand every aspect of the representation, just as an English-speaking client would.

Verbal communication procedures:

1. <u>Face-to-face appointments are best, if at all possible.</u> Make sure an approved interpreter is available to the client at all appointments (see list of approved in-house and community interpreters in Appendix A). Make sure all interpreters other than in-house staff sign a confidentiality agreement (copy in Exhibit E), and keep the signed copy in the client's file.

2. <u>What if there are no approved interpreters available locally for the client's appointment with the advocate?</u> Some clients may speak a rare language for which no approved interpreters are available in the community. If this is the case, the advocate should use the telephone interpreting service (LLE Link) at the appointment, putting the interpreter on speakerphone. It may be cheaper for advocates in offices with fewer local interpreting resources (e.g., rural offices) to meet face-to-face with the client and have one of the approved local interpreters in our more urban areas interpret over speakerphone.

3. <u>For short telephone contacts with a client, such as to schedule an appointment or to give advice and counsel only, call one of our local approved interpreters or our telephone interpreting service (LLE Link)</u>. Then, conference in your client using the conference feature on your phone. Although telephone service is more expensive for longer conversations with clients, it is actually cheaper for contacts under 15 minutes. However, do not shorten your conversation with a client just to save money.

   To use LLE Link, call the service at 1-800-234-0780 and enter our account number. Then, enter the code for the language you need (see list of language codes in Appendix B). You will be connected with an interpreter within a few minutes.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Untrained interpreters, such as family members, friends and caseworkers, may not be used. If the client insists on using the untrained interpreter, note this in the client's file and provide an approved interpreter as back-up to ensure accurate communication. *Under no circumstances may a person under age 18 serve as an interpreter, even if the client insists.* Inform the client that for liability purposes, it is our agency policy not to use child interpreters.

Interpreters not on the approved list must submit credentials and training background to the Executive Director and receive approval before being used.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION WITH CLIENTS

As with verbal communications with clients, it is important to ensure that Limited English Proficient clients understand all information contained in our written correspondence. We cannot send Limited English Proficient clients letters in English and expect them to get help translating them on their own.

Procedures for corresponding with Limited English Proficient clients in writing:

1. <u>Check the "Languages" folder on the S: drive to see if the form letter you need is already in our database</u>. We have commonly used client letters in Spanish, Arabic, Bosnian, Farsi, Russian and Vietnamese. All letters are bilingual, so that advocates can tell from the English text what each letter says. To use the form letters, simply type the client's name and address under the date of the letter, and print it out. Under the English signature line, "Attorney/Paralegal" appears; circle whichever applies. Under the signature line for the second language, "Attorney/Paralegal" appears in the same order in that language; circle whichever applies.

2. <u>If no form letter exists in the language you need, contact the in-house LEP Contact Person to have the letter translated</u>. The letter will then be added to the "Languages" folder on the S: drive for everyone to use.

3. <u>If the language in question has no written form, or if the letter will be very detailed and/or case specific, you may want to meet with the client face-to-face or over the phone rather than sending a letter</u>. Make sure to document the content of the meeting in the client's file. If you have any doubts about how to proceed, contact your Managing Attorney and/or the LEP Contact Person.

4. <u>Handing out brochures to Limited English Proficient Clients</u>. If you hand out brochures, make sure they are in the person's language if possible (see current list of available multilingual brochures in Appendix B; see your LEP contact person to order copies). English brochures should be accompanied by a multilingual insert explaining the right to have the brochure read to the person in his or her language (see copy in Appendix D).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not send Limited English Proficient clients questionnaires (e.g., DAP Questionnaires, Bankruptcy Questionnaires, Divorce Questionnaires) to complete on their own. Instead, help the client complete the questionnaire at a face-to-face appointment with an approved interpreter, or over the phone using the telephone interpreting service.