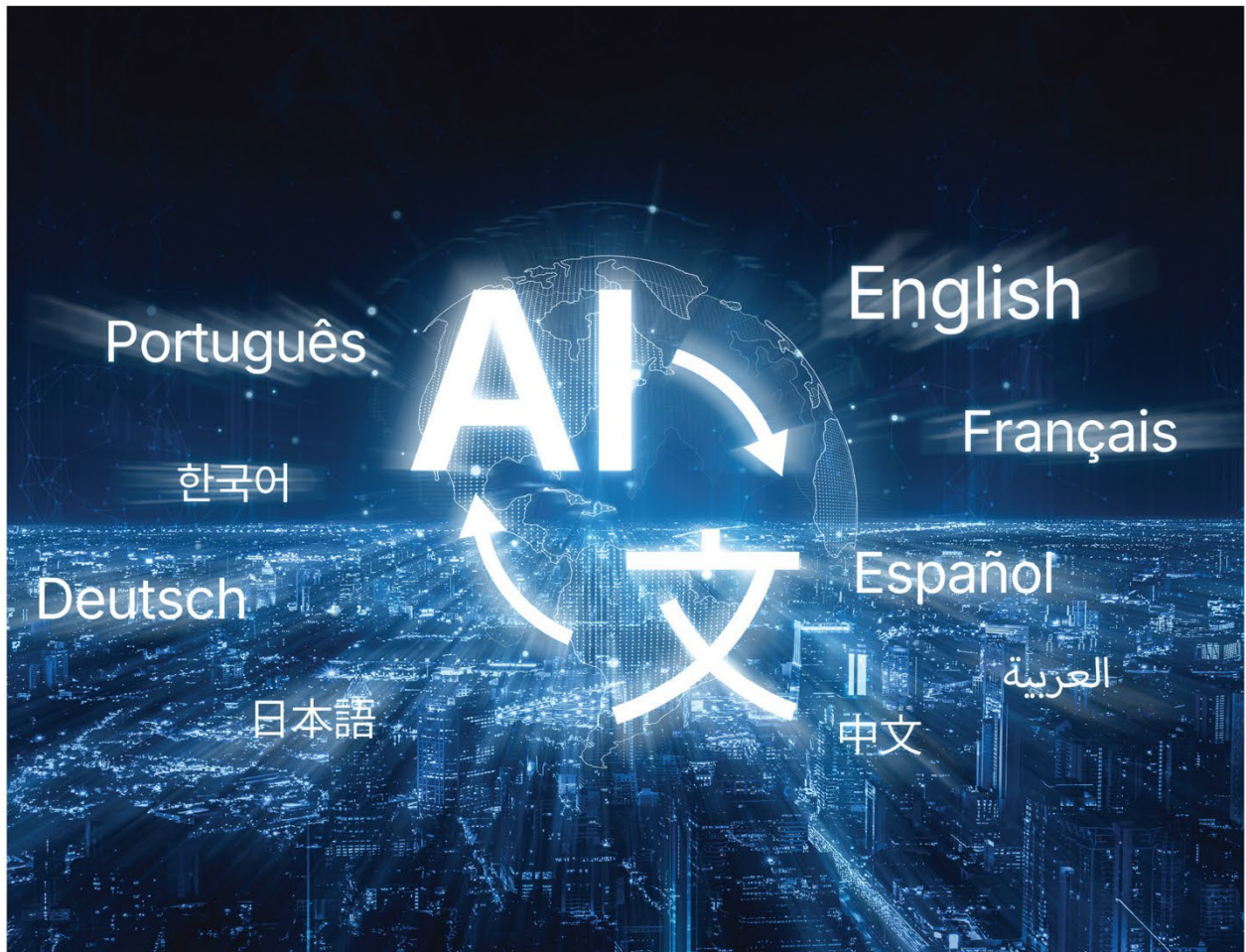




JB Pritzker, Governor

Heidi E. Mueller, Director

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Language Access Plan



May 1, 2026

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 AGENCY OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Illinois is home to one of the largest immigrant populations in the United States, with nearly 1.9 million immigrants contributing to the state's vibrant cultural and economic landscape. Among them, nearly 1 million residents speak languages other than English at home and report speaking English less than "very well." As the state's linguistically diverse population continues to grow, Illinois recognizes that all residents—regardless of English proficiency—have a right to equitable access to government services.

This Language Access Plan outlines the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) five-year plan for language access implementation, a timeline selected to achieve greater alignment with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act. Section 1 of the Language Access Plan sets the stage for the plan by providing an overview of the Department and establishing the purpose, goals, and guiding principles that anchor the Language Access Plan. The sections that follow, 2 to 7, address specific areas of language access implementation.

Each area of implementation is addressed in two distinct parts, which include:

1. **Overview of Standard** (or Implementation Area): A brief description of the standard based on federal guidance and the Language Equity and Access Act.
2. **Current Department of Children and Family Services Systems and Practices**: A description of DCFS' current practices, existing infrastructure, and/or progress to date in relation to the standard.

Implementation Goals and a 5-Year Action Plan are provided to support agency implementation:

- **Implementation Goals**: provides an overview of the overarching goals DCFS will pursue to meet compliance objectives.
- **5-Year Action Plan**: a list of detailed time-bound action items to be completed by the Department in three phases over an implementation period of five years:
 - Phase 0 (2025) Submit final draft of Language Access Plan.
 - Phase I (2026) Submit policy and procedures on determining when and where DCFS bilingual positions are needed. Posting of bilingual forms on the D-Net (intranet) will include multiple languages and be converted to a fillable format. Develop written policy and procedure on testing for language proficiency of foster parent where children whose primary language is other than English.
 - Phase II (2027) Proposal on creating a pipeline for hiring bilingual staff.

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- Phase III (2027, 2028) Revise Language Access Plan to reflect changes and ensure that all necessary tracking and information fields that are needed to track monolingual families and their needs are implemented in the new DCFS database system, IllinoisConnect.

The timeframe is subject to modification by DCFS.

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES' ROLE

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) mission is to promote the well-being of children, youth, and families by responding to reports of potential abuse and neglect and, when needed, providing family-centered care and connection to resources. Our vision is that every child and youth can grow and thrive in family.

To accomplish our mission and vision, in 2024, DCFS came together as a team of more than 3,800 people to define our values:

- Family-Focused
- Integrity
- Respect
- Empathy
- Equity

These values correspond to DCFS' goals of:

- Right sizing the front door.
- Empowering and equipping our staff for success.
- Centering our policies, practices and procedures on what is best for children, youth and families.
- Better supporting children and youth with complex medical and healthcare needs.
- Ensuring our children and youth transition out of care successfully.

From helping more than 6,248 Illinois children achieve permanency in FY25 through reunification, adoption or guardianship; to the licensing of nearly 7,400 day care facilities; responding to 238,169 reports made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, and provision of services to 60,000 families annually; the department and its more than 3,920 employees are dedicated to providing unrivaled professional service to ensure safe, loving homes and brighter futures for every child in Illinois.

The DCFS website is: <https://dcfs@illinois.gov>

The DCFS language access coordinator is:

Lourdes Colon Rodriguez

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Division of Strategy and Performance Innovation

217-761-0890

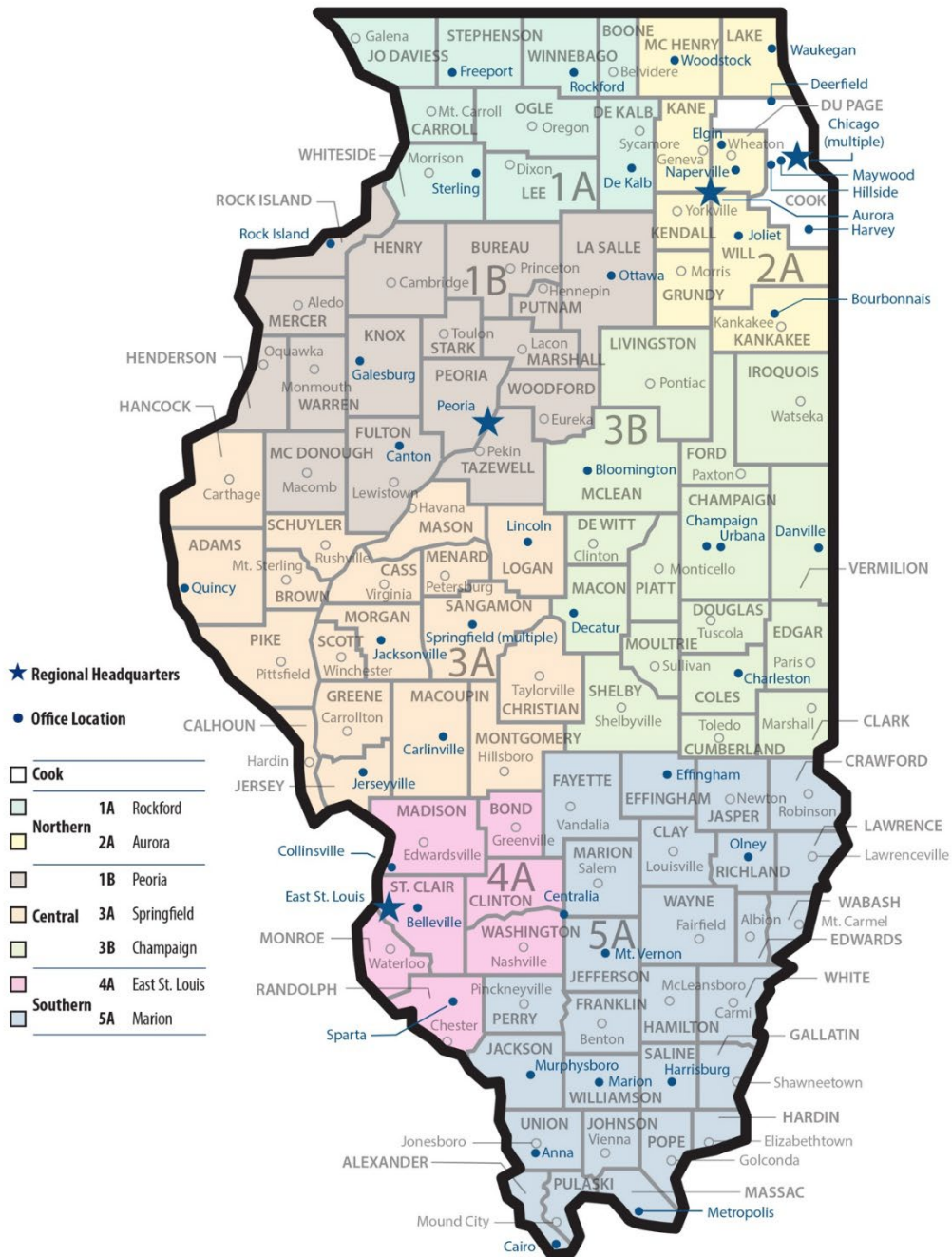
Lourdes.Rodriguez@illinois.gov

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The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is comprised of many divisions, offices, and programs.

Offices:

STATE OF ILLINOIS DCFS OFFICES



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Divisions:

Affirmative Action	Intact Family Services
Attorney General	Internal Audits
Budget and Finance	Learning and Professional Development
Central Region	Legal Services
Central Region Child Protection/Champaign Sub-Region	Legislative Affairs
Central Region Child Protection/Peoria Sub-Region	Licensing
Central Region Child Protection/Springfield Sub-Region	Monitoring
Child Protection	Northern Region
Clinical and Child Services	Northern Region Child Protection/Aurora Sub-Region
Clinical Practice	Northern Region Child Protection/Rockford Sub-Region
Communications	Office of the Chief Deputy Director
Contract Administration	Office of the Chief Deputy Director of Operations
Cook County Child Protection/Cook North	Office of Research and Child Well-Being
Cook County Child Protection/Cook Central	Office of the Chief of Staff
Cook County Child Protection/Cook North	Office of the Guardian
Cook County Child Protection/Cook South	Quality Enhancement
Cook County Permanency/Cook Central	Southern Region
Cook County Permanency/Cook South	Southern Region Child Protection/East St. Louis Sub-Region
Department of Innovation & Technology	Southern Region Child Protection/Marion Sub-Region
Director's Office	Strategy and Performance Execution
Division of Permanency	
Education and Transition Services	
Employee Services	
Inspector General	

Programs:

- Child Protection
- Permanency/Placement Services
- Intact Family Services
- Education and Transition Services
- Legal/Immigration Services
- Clinical/Nursing Services
- Foster Parent Recruitment, Licensing and Pride Training
- Day Care and Institutions Licensing
- Family Advocacy Centers
- Guardianship and Adoption Services
- Written Translation, Telephone Interpretation, In-Person Interpretation
- Youth Advisory Boards

1.2 LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

PURPOSE AND GOALS

This Language Access Plan aims to provide guidance to DCFS staff and establish a roadmap to support meaningful access to the Department's services, programs, and opportunities for individuals with LEP. The Language Access Plan also seeks to align the Department's efforts and bring DCFS into compliance with Illinois' Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723), the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other applicable federal and state standards and guidelines.

AUTHORITY

As a recipient of federal financial assistance, Illinois is bound by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 45 C.F.R. Part 80, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (which includes Limited English Proficiency). Illinois is committed to advancing the goals of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in alignment with the state of Illinois' Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) (42 U.S.C. § 2000d) (Title VI) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, the [Department/Agency] is bound by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7, and its implementing regulation, 45 C.F.R. Part 80, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (which includes Limited English Proficiency).

Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003

The [Illinois Civil Rights Act](#) prohibits state, county, or local government in Illinois from excluding a person from participation in, denying a person the benefits of, or subjecting a person to discrimination under any program or activity on the grounds of that person's race, color, national origin, or gender. Additionally, the Illinois Civil Rights Act prohibits using criteria or methods that have a discriminatory effect.

Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA)

The [Illinois Human Rights Act](#) (IHRA) consolidates existing laws and administrative processes addressing civil rights in Illinois. IHRA prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, financial credit, and public accommodations because of race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, unfavorable military discharge, and marital status, as well as retaliation for opposing discrimination. IHRA established the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and the Illinois Human Rights Commission (IHRC) as enforcing agencies.¹

¹ <https://dhr.illinois.gov/about-us/directors-office/agency-overview-and-history.html>

Language Equity and Access Act

Signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker in 2024, the Language Equity and Access Act aims to ensure that all residents can access state information, programs, and services equitably, and that limited English proficiency does not prevent anyone from fully participating in civic life.² The Act strives to guarantee that all Illinois residents, including individuals with LEP, have meaningful and equitable access to state services, programs, information, and activities by removing language barriers. The Act incorporates federal guidance for ensuring meaningful access for individuals with LEP and other federal and state legislation that prohibit discrimination based on national origin and promote language access, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Illinois Human Rights Act of 1979, and the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003.³

The Act designates the Governor’s Office of New Americans (ONA) as the lead agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of statewide language access policy, with the support of the Illinois Department of Human Services. ONA is tasked with providing oversight, offering technical assistance, and ensuring agency compliance with the Act’s requirements.

Under the Act, ONA leads the development of a Language Needs Assessment Report using U.S. Census data to identify the languages spoken across Illinois and inform agency planning. All state agencies will develop language access plans that will inform how that agency will ensure meaningful access to individuals with LEP, appoint a language access coordinator (LAC) to oversee implementation within each agency, and translate vital documents and provide qualified interpretation services for LEP populations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In accordance with federal and state requirements, including the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723), this Language Access Plan provides a framework for ensuring that DCFS can deliver timely and meaningful language assistance services to LEP constituents served by the Department. DCFS is committed to providing equitable language access to its services, programs, and activities for all individuals, regardless of the language they use. DCFS will operationalize this commitment to language access by:

- Designating a language access coordinator responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Language Access Plan.
- Serving all individuals with LEP and providing accurate, timely, and effective communication, including oral and written language services needed to help them communicate effectively, and providing them with equal opportunity to participate fully in the services, activities, or other programs administered by the state. This includes displaying public notices in commonly spoken

² *Language Equity and Access Act*, Public Act 103-0723, 103rd Gen. Assembly (Ill. 2024), <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=103-0723>.

³ *Language Equity and Access Act*, Pub. Act 103-0723. <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=103-0723>.

languages that communicate the availability of free language assistance services and how to access them.

- Conducting a regular assessment that describes the population of persons with LEP the agency serves, the policy and programmatic actions implemented to ensure meaningful access, and the metrics used to measure compliance with the Language Equity and Access Act. This assessment will be informed by the federally recognized four-factor analysis, which considers the number or proportion of persons with LEP served, the frequency and context, the nature and importance of services provided, and the agency's available resources and costs.
- Strengthening the Department's capacity to develop and distribute multilingual content and expanding access to translated vital documents and other resources. Translation of vital records will be prioritized with guidance provided by ONA. The agency will also work to expand multilingual website content, including program information, complaint procedures, and eligibility criteria.
- Establishing mechanisms to track progress across divisions, programs, and funded partners, and supporting efforts to meet language access compliance standards. This includes collecting and reporting data on how to use interpretation and translation vendor services, including volume, language type, and service type. DCFS will maintain a complaint and review process and ensure timely resolution.
- Providing ongoing employee development and training to maintain well-trained bilingual employees and general staff. DCFS will also collect and report data on bilingual staff roles, language certifications, and language capacity across its workforce.
- Ensuring the Language Access Plan and related materials are publicly available through the DCFS website and other accessible formats.

DEFINITIONS

- **State Agency:** Any state of Illinois agency, board, or commission, directly responsible to the governor that provides direct or indirect services, resources, programs, information, data, policies, instructions, or activities to the public, funded entities, and staff.
- **Tier I State Agency:** State agencies that have primary responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public and have a relatively large staff, budget, and operational scope.
- **Tier II State Agency:** State agencies that have responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public and/or have a relatively medium-to-small staff, budget, and/or operational scope.
- **Tier III State Agency:** State agencies that do not have primary responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public; they may provide information to the public.
- **Coordinating Entity:** The Language Access Program, housed in the Office of New Americans within the Office of the Governor as the entity assigned to coordinate the efforts of Illinois' state

agencies to provide meaningful language access to individuals with LEP in accordance with the Language Equity and Access Act.

- **Funded Entity:** Any contractors, grantees, and recipients that receive financial assistance from the state agency for the purpose of delivering programs, activities, research, information, or services to the public. DCFS child welfare services contractors are part of the Child Welfare Contributing Agencies (CWCAs).
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** The inability or difficulty to understand or to effectively express oneself in spoken or written English as a result of one's national origin, and the individual has not developed fluency in the English language.
- **Individuals with LEP:** Individuals who self-identify as speaking English less than "very well" according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey.
- **Language of Lesser Diffusion:** Any language used within a distinct geographic area, such as a city, county, or state, where the population of speakers is relatively small.
- **Language Access:** The process of ensuring that individuals with LEP have access to vital documents and services in a language they can understand, either through interpretation or translation services. Please see Meaningful Language Access below.
- **Meaningful Language Access:** The ability to receive accurate, timely, and effective information in one's spoken or preferred language, and to participate in and benefit from public services offered by a state agency, at no cost to the individual with LEP. Meaningful access must not be unreasonably restricted, delayed, or inferior compared to access provided to individuals with English proficiency.
- **Digital Language Access:** The utilization of technology to guarantee that individuals with LEP can understand and engage with digital content in their preferred language. This includes the use of tools such as translation applications, multilingual websites, and various digital resources, all of which aim to enhance information accessibility for people, regardless of language disparities.
- **Language Access Plan (LAP):** A management document and roadmap that outlines the tasks and priorities to be implemented to ensure the state agency will meet compliance standards set forth in the Language Equity and Access Act.
- **Statewide Manager for Language Access Program:** Staff of the coordinating entity tasked with coordinating and overseeing all language access implementation statewide and across all covered and funded entities and overseeing the language access coordinators.
- **Language Access Coordinator (LAC):** Staff of a state agency tasked with coordinating and overseeing the entity's language access implementation activities and coordinates and oversees the language access liaisons to ensure that language access information is shared across all state agency programs and divisions.
- **Language Access Liaison (LAL):** Staff of a division, program, or funded entity tasked with coordinating and overseeing the entity's language access implementation activities, working under an LAC.
- **Language Assistance Services:** Oral and written language services needed to assist individuals with LEP to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide individuals with LEP meaningful

access to, and equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, or other programs administered by the state.

- **Compliance Evaluation Framework:** An evaluation methodology involving the Language Assessment Rubric and Reporting Tool which the statewide manager for language access will use to monitor the compliance of state agencies.
- **Interpretation:** The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning. See also Oral Language Services.
- **Oral Language Services:** Includes various methods to provide verbal information and interpretation, such as staff interpreters, Multilingual Staff, telephone interpreter programs, tele-video interpretation services, and private interpreter programs. See also Interpretation.
- **Multilingual Staff:** Staff member who has demonstrated proficiency in one or more languages other than English and is formally assigned and fairly compensated to either provide language assistance services such as interpretation and/or translation to individuals with LEP, or serve in a policy, resource, or advisory role to provide their cultural and linguistic expertise.
- **Language Service Provider (LSP):** A vetted contractor/vendor contracted to perform language assistance services, such as interpretation and/or translation, for individuals with LEP.
- **Four-Factor Analysis:** A framework intended to aid recipients of federal financial assistance with conducting an individualized assessment of their programs and activities to help them prioritize language access services.
- **Translation:** The conversion of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language) to convey the intent and essential meaning of the source text.
- **Plain Language:** A style of communication that aims to make written or spoken information easy to understand for a broad audience. The Plain Language Act (2010) defines plain language as “clear, concise, well organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.”⁴ Language intended for public consumption avoids non-essential information and complex phrasing; highlights essential information; avoids the use of technical terms and industry jargon; and simplifies complex information.
- **Vital Documents:** Public-facing written materials, whether in paper or electronic format and made available on any platform (including websites), that are created, issued, or distributed by a state agency to communicate with the public. These documents contain information that affects an individual’s access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; are required by law; or serve to: inform the public about rights, responsibilities, rules, services, resources, or events; allow individuals to apply for or participate in programs or benefits; notify individuals about their eligibility, participation, or benefits; and provide instruction, guidance, or complaint submission processes.

⁴ See Public Law 111-274. 124 Stat. 2861 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf>.

SECTION 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Illinois is home to a diverse population with cultural and linguistic backgrounds from around the world. To support DCFS in determining and prioritizing language assistance services, the Language Access Plan includes a Needs Assessment that identifies the languages spoken by individuals with languages other than English served or likely to be served by the Department.

A four-factor analysis is used in this section as a framework to determine the language services DCFS needs to prioritize to meet the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency. The four-factor analysis is a tool designed to help recipients of federal financial assistance conduct an individualized assessment that considers the following four factors:⁵

- Factor 1: Data collection and analysis of the population with limited English proficiency
- Factor 2: Data collection and analysis of languages encountered
- Factor 3: Services provided to general public and/or prospective limited English proficient users
- Factor 4: Budget and available resources

Data provided in this section illustrates the number of individuals with limited English proficiency who may need language services, as well as the types of services DCFS provides that the general public and potential individuals with LEP would access.

2.1 FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS

FACTOR 1

Overview of Standards

Limited English Proficient Population Data Collection and Analysis assesses the number or proportion of individuals with limited English proficiency that could be served by or could encounter DCFS.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires that each state agency conduct an individualized assessment to determine the adequacy of its Language Access Plan. This assessment must consider the frequency with which persons with LEP come in contact with services, programs, or activities provided by the agency. In addition, the Act directs ONA, with the support of the Illinois Department of Human Services and any other relevant agencies, to prepare a Language Needs Assessment Report based on available U.S. Census data. This report must identify languages spoken throughout the state and examine the geographic patterns and trend data to inform the development of agency Language Access Plans.

The Language Access Plan must include a description of the LEP populations served, the policy and programmatic actions taken to ensure meaningful access, and the metrics used to measure

⁵ See Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons (67 FR 41455) (2002).
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2002/06/18/02-15207/guidance-to-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi-prohibition-against-national>

compliance with the Act. Agencies must regularly monitor demographic population changes to ensure language services adequately reflect actual needs, particularly for services frequently utilized by the public.

This analysis helps ensure that DCFS is positioned to adequately identify underserved communities and emerging language needs and address any barriers that may prevent access to critical public services.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS is using the following findings from a demographic analysis⁶ conducted by the University of Illinois Chicago in partnership with the Office of New Americans on the state’s individuals with limited English proficiency:

- In Illinois, 1 million residents speak English less than "very well," and speak a language other than English at home. Both federal and state policies recognize that these individuals have a right to equitable access to government services, which includes information and communication in a language they understand.
- Eleven languages are spoken by more than 10,000 limited-English speakers in Illinois, including:

Largest Language Groups and Largest Limited-English Language Groups in Illinois: 2018-2022			
Largest Language Groups		Largest Limited-English Language Groups	
	# of Speakers		# of Speakers
Spanish	1,638,222	Spanish	616,760
Polish	169,308	Polish	73,843
Chinese*	106,399	Chinese*	51,494
Filipino, Tagalog	86,051	Filipino, Tagalog	23,198
Arabic	67,017	Arabic	20,342
Urdu	56,122	Korean	20,165
Gujarati	50,196	Gujarati	18,762
Hindi	47,274	Russian	17,649
Russian	44,211	Vietnamese	13,966
Korean	39,624	Urdu	13,893
French	36,728	Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Little Russian	11,817

- The predominant language other than English in many Illinois counties is Spanish, but closer examination of the most common non-English languages shows that immigrants and migrants come to Illinois from many places. For example, in Champaign County, the primary language spoken in limited English households is Mandarin, and in Macon County, it is Tagalog. Additionally, in Cass and Knox counties, the primary language is French/Haitian/Cajun. In

⁶ See Rob Paral, "Language Needs Assessment Report, _ Office of New Americans, Office of the Governor of Illinois, Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois Chicago (2025), <https://arcq.is/1Py4n0>.

Madison County, it's Tagalog. In Cook, DuPage, and Kane counties, the primary language category is Slavic. In Boone County, "other Asian Pacific Islander" is second to Spanish.

- A statewide map of persons who consider themselves to not speak English "very well" shows that the largest numbers of such persons are in the metro Chicago area. Nevertheless, significant numbers of up to 9,000 are in townships across the state and are often located near metro areas such as St. Louis, MO, Springfield, Champaign, and Rock Island. There are also notable populations in relatively rural townships in counties such as Cass, Douglas, or Union.
- After years of decline, the number of Illinois residents who consider themselves to not speak English "very well" is increasing. In 2019, there were 1 million persons in Illinois with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). By 2023 (the most recent data available), the number of Illinoisans with LEP was 1,082,000, an increase of 82,000.

FACTOR 2

Overview of Standard

Language Encounters Data Collection and Analysis assesses the frequency with which limited English proficient (LEP) individuals encounter Department of Children and Family Service services, programs, or activities.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to conduct an individualized assessment as part of its Language Access Plan that considers the frequency with which persons with LEP come into contact with the services, programs, and activities provided by the agency. This analysis supports the Department's ability to identify language access needs and ensure meaningful access.

To ensure that all encounters between DCFS and individuals with LEP across programs and services are collected in a comprehensive and ongoing manner, DCFS will:

- Collect data on encounters with individuals with LEP that take place in person, by telephone, via email, and through online platforms;
- Track the language encounters and types of language assistance services requested and/or provided during those encounters; and
- Conduct regular assessments and identify high-volume languages and the most frequently requested or needed language assistance services to ensure meaningful access that is accurate, timely, and effective at no cost to persons with LEP.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS uses state of Illinois Department of Central Management Services vendors to track language usage by providing an annual report that details the languages the services are being provided, the frequency and the duration. Data is collected to include deaf and hard of hearing and blind services as they are included as part of language access.

- Interpreter services by telephone via CMS master contract with Propio Telephone Interpreter Services.
- In-person face-to-face interpretation via CMS master contract with InterpreNet LLC.

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- Language assistance to deaf and hard of hearing clients.
- Blind services.

DCFS provides language assistance in the following languages:

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| • Spanish | • Vietnamese | • Uzbek |
| • Arabic | • Swahili | • Albanian |
| • Polish | • Korean | • Amharic |
| • Russian | • K'iche | • Assyrian |
| • Haitian French | • Qanjobal | • Bagla |
| • Chinese | • Burmese | • Bengali |
| • Mandarin | • Simplified Chinese | • Bosnian |
| • Hindi | • Ukrainian | • Bulgarian |
| • Urdu | • Mongolian | |
| • Tagalog | • French | |

FACTOR 3

Overview of Standard

Services Provided to General Public and/or Prospective Limited English Proficient Users, assesses the nature and importance of the programs, activities, or services provided by DCFS.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to implement an individualized assessment as part of their Language Access Plan that includes the nature and importance of the services, programs, or activities provided by the state agency.

To ensure meaningful access to critical and urgent information and services, DCFS will outline procedures for prioritizing language assistance for vital and urgent information and activities. The Department will review all services and information and will prioritize language assistance for programs, activities, services, or information that, if not understood by individuals using languages other than English, could have immediate and/or severe impacts.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS provides an array of services to children and families with limited English proficiency. Specifically, there are certified bilingual Spanish speaking caseworkers staffing the DCFS 24/7/365 Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline and the Department provides a telephone interpreter service which offers more than 40 different languages available 24/7/365. DCFS currently has 183 certified bilingual Spanish speaking staff who provide services to families – from placement for children in care, intact family services for children living with their parents or a guardian, nursing services, clinical services, advocacy, child welfare preventative services, and educational services to name a few areas. Our Child Welfare Contributing Agencies (CWCA) currently employ 107 certified Spanish speaking caseworkers servicing Spanish speaking youth in care and living with their parents (intact family). DCFS and CWCA also provide foster care licensing services in Spanish via Spanish speaking workers and through the Propio Language Line.

Language access posters are displayed in DCFS office lobbies and on closed-circuit monitors located in the lobbies. The posters were also mailed to every CWCA for posting in their offices. These posters are also available to order from DCFS Central Stores.

FACTOR 4

Overview of Standard

Budget and Available Resources assesses the resources currently available to DCFS, as well as the cost associated with providing the language assistance.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to review the resources available to the state agency and the associated costs. It is best practice for the budget for language access services to be based on programmatic needs and the top five languages prioritized for services. Additionally, a strategic practice outlines the costs associated with current language assistance services, as well as assess the level of resources and the capacity to implement and support additional language services over time. Based on the assessment of resources, DCFS will identify efforts to support cost-savings and cost-sharing when/if needed. Such efforts may include sharing resources with other departments and agencies and/or using technology to support the delivery of language assistance services.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS utilizes a master contract through the Illinois Department of Central Management Services language assistance providers, Propio Language Line, InterpreNet LLC for in-person interpretation and Multilingual Connections LLC for written translation. The DCFS Office of Child and Family Policy is the point of contact for all requests for written translation of documents, service plans, and redacted investigations from DCFS and CWCA staff.

The Office of Child and Family Policy maintains a master list of all documents that have been translated by language to lessen duplication of the same document and ensure that DCFS has the latest and most current document available.

When a staff member requests an interpreter in a language that is not provided by the CMS master contract, an email is sent to the DCFS language access coordinator for assistance.

When there is a request to translate a document or a decision needs to be made regarding what documents to translate, the deputy director of the division in which the document originates makes the determination of what documents require written translation.

SECTION 3: STAFFING AND COORDINATION

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act outlines the requirements for each state agency to designate a language access coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the agency's language access plan. The language access coordinator will support

ongoing compliance by partnering with ONA to ensure coordinated implementation and compliance with language access requirements.

To ensure adequate staffing to support the development, management, and oversight of the language access activities, and consistent with the Language Equity and Access Act's directive to ensure adequate staff of bilingual employees, DCFS will establish internal roles to implement its Language Access Plan. These roles include a language access coordinator and may also include a language access liaison within divisions or programs to support localized implementation and coordination of language assistance services, in alignment with national language access best practices.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act directs state agencies to incorporate language equity compliance provisions into their contracts with vendors, grantees, and purchase of care entities, ensuring that these funded entities provide language assistance services to individuals with LEP.

DCFS conducts programs and services in partnership with a wide network of grantees and funded entities and will take affirmative steps to ensure those entities fulfill language access obligations to support monitoring and accountability.

SECTION 4: LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful communication and access to information for families and children with LEP we serve. The Language Assistance Services section outlines the types of language assistance currently provides, as well as the services DCFS plans to provide to support meaningful communication and participation for individuals with LEP and who are limited English proficient. The language assistance services outlined in the Language Access Plan include oral interpretation services, virtual interpretation services, in-language assistance with multilingual staff, print and online translation services, and the development of other multilingual media content.

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Department's language access staff, including language access coordinators and language access liaisons, who are responsible for monitoring and ensuring the implementation of language assistance services according to the Language Access Plan across the agency.

4.1 LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES PLAN

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

LANGUAGE NEED IDENTIFICATION

Overview of Standard

The Language Access Plan requires state agencies to develop clear policy and programmatic actions to ensure meaningful access. It is national language access best practice for state agencies to utilize

language-need identification materials, such as printed multilingual “I-Speak” resource cards, to assist with the identification of the languages requested by individuals with LEP. These tools support meaningful access by enabling individuals with LEP to indicate their language needs, consistent with state agencies’ obligations to ensure accurate, timely, and effective communication.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS has developed printed multilingual “I-Speak” resource cards and posters that are available to all staff and list 12 languages stating, “You Have a Right to an Interpreter,” and include the Propio Telephone Interpreter Services toll-free phone number and the access code.

The language access coordinator monitors the demand for languages provided to DCFS clients by Propio Telephone Language Line, InterpreNet LLC, and Multilingual Connections and determines if signage needs to be expanded to include other languages.

HIRING/CONTRACTING QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS FOR IN-PERSON COMMUNICATION

Overview of Standard

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to ensure individuals with LEP have access to competent, timely, and effective interpretation services when interacting with agency staff, programs, and services. Agencies are required to provide meaningful access. Using trained and qualified interpreters, in alignment with standards developed by ONA, supports state agency compliance and ensures meaningful access.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS contracts with the State of Illinois Department of Central Management Services for certified professional language line telephone interpreters, in-person interpreters and for written translations. Language Line telephone interpreters are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In-person interpreters are available upon written request. All interpreter services are available statewide, and free of charge to our families. DCFS tests and certifies all staff in bilingual Spanish Speaking positions whether DCFS or Child Welfare Contributing Agency staff who are assigned to service Spanish Speaking children, youth and families.

HIRING/CONTRACTING QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS FOR VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION (OVER-THE-PHONE OR VIDEO)

Overview of Standard

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to ensure individuals with LEP have access to competent, timely, and effective interpretation services when interacting with agency staff, programs, and services.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS contracts interpretation services through the CMS master contract with Propio Telephone Language Line, InterpreNet LLC in-person interpretation. The Propio Telephone Language Line is

staffed 24/7/365. InterpreNet LLC is available through request and appointment only as it is in-person interpretation.

EMPLOYING/ UTILIZING BILINGUAL OR MULTILINGUAL STAFF

Overview of Standard

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require the Governor's Office of New Americans, with the support of the Illinois Department of Human Services and any other relevant agencies to set standards for adequate staffing of bilingual employees at state agencies, including a methodology for monitoring implementation and updating the State Services Assurance Act and the Bilingual Employment Plan, based on the Language needs Assessment. While the Language Equity and Access Act specifically uses the term "bilingual staff," national language access best practices recognize and value the role of multilingual staff, highlighting the broad linguistic competencies of individuals who possess proficiency in more than two languages or multiple linguistic repertoires.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS currently administers a Bilingual Spanish Speaking Certification Exam to ensure that the person tested is fluent in Spanish being able to speak, read and write in Spanish.

DCFS will develop a policy and procedure to address adequate bilingual staffing including a methodology to determine when and where bilingual staff are needed. This project should be finished by the end of fiscal year 2026.

TRANSLATION OF VITAL DOCUMENTS AND ONLINE CONTENT

Overview of Standard

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires agencies to ensure that vital documents are translated accurately, completely, and in a timely manner by qualified translators.

Translation of vital documents will be in accordance with the Language Equity & Access Act and guidance issued by ONA.

In instances where LEP populations fall below these thresholds but still require meaningful access, agencies must provide written notice in the primary language of the right to oral interpretation of the written material at no cost. Translation priorities should be guided by the most recent Language Needs Assessment Report and the demographic data of the agency's service population.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS determines that a vital document is a document that must be provided to the parents, guardian, youth or foster parent and address a legal notification, may require their signature or is of importance for the family to be notified of a DCFS rule. Vital documents are also those documents that are provided to a family during the first contact with the family such as during the investigation period.

The decision as to which documents are vital to translate is made by the language access coordinator in conjunction with the deputy of the originating division, such as Child Protection, Intact Family Services, or Permanency. Vital documents are translated into 12 different languages and translated into additional languages as the need arises. DCFS staff have access to a “Templates” drive on state-issued computers where these documents are located. The DCFS website is translated into six languages in addition to English.

Once a document is identified as vital, a translation request is submitted in accordance with the Department Guide to Obtain Language Translation Services (recently revised). Requests are sent to the dedicated translation email inbox managed by the bilingual team within the Office of Child and Family Policy (OCFP). This team reviews and processes the requests and forwards them to the Department’s contracted translation vendor, Multilingual Connections.

Upon completion, the translated documents are returned to the OCFP bilingual team, who reviews them for accuracy and completeness before sending the final versions back to the requesting division.

To facilitate and expedite the delivery of translated vital documents, the OCFP bilingual team maintains an organized shared drive titled “GOCFP Translation.” This drive includes folders categorized by language, as well as an Excel spreadsheet that allows staff to quickly determine whether a form has already been translated, ensuring prompt responses to new requests.

Currently, the Department has vital forms translated into Spanish, Polish and Arabic, as well as 10 additional vital forms translated into the following 12 languages: French, Traditional Chinese, Mongolian, Burmese, Karen, Russian, Vietnamese, Urdu, Uzbek, Qanjobal, Ukrainian, and Swahili. All vital forms are also available in the DCFS computer system under the “Templates” section, organized by language, which is accessible to all staff.

Additionally, the DCFS website is available in six languages in addition to English to further enhance accessibility for families and the public.

DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT IN OTHER FORMATS (PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS, RADIO MESSAGING, SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION)

Overview of Standard

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to take steps to ensure that digital content is accessible to individuals with LEP. All translations of public-facing digital content will be completed in a manner that ensures accuracy, completeness, and timeliness, consistent with the Act’s requirement for competent translation services. The selection of languages for translation will be guided by current demographic data, the state’s Language Needs Assessment, and thresholds outlined in the Language Equity and Access Act.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

Overview

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is committed to providing meaningful language access to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in accordance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act. Translations of public-facing content are completed accurately, thoroughly, and in a timely manner by qualified professionals. The selection of languages for translation is guided by statewide demographic data, the state’s Language Needs Assessment, and the thresholds established by the Act.

Current Systems and Practices

- **Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs):**
DCFS has not produced radio PSAs in any language in recent years.
- **Social Media Content:**
DCFS rarely publishes social media content in languages other than English due to strategic prioritization based on audience demographics and communication effectiveness. Multilingual posts are shared selectively when targeting specific communities to maximize impact and ensure resources are focused where the greatest need and reach exist. For example, the “Foster My Future” campaign included Spanish-language content to engage Spanish-speaking audiences effectively.
- **Website and Marketing Materials:**
The DCFS public website includes a feature that allows users to translate content into six languages in addition to English. Other public-facing documents and outreach materials are translated into additional languages as needed, with certified vendors ensuring linguistic accuracy, cultural relevance, and compliance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act.

SECTION 5: NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

In addition to providing language assistance services, the Notification of Language Assistance Services section will outline how DCFS can notify the public of language assistance services and provide information on how language assistance services can be requested. Such communication will assist individuals with LEP in understanding the services provided by DCFS, which can increase public trust and confidence.

5.1 NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES PLAN

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies ensure that the general public and individuals with LEP are informed of the availability of free interpretation and translation services and how to request them. To meet this requirement, DCFS will provide multilingual public notices in various formats—both digital and physical—to promote broad public awareness. All notices will clearly explain how individuals can request interpretation or translation services and

will be made available in the most frequently spoken languages identified through demographic analysis and the state's Language Needs Assessment Report.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS has Language Access Posters in all DCFS lobbies and closed-circuit monitors and provides the same materials to all Child Welfare Contributing Agencies.

DCFS develops multilingual content to ensure that information and services are accessible to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Multilingual content is created in various formats, including digital materials, print publications, and multimedia resources, to meet the diverse communication needs of Illinois families and communities.

The DCFS public website features a wide range of pamphlets, brochures, and manuals that provide guidance on critical topics such as adoption, child abuse prevention, preparing youth for independence, reporting abuse or neglect, foster home licensing, child advocacy centers, extended family support programs, children's behavioral health, clinical and intact family recovery programs, water safety, and mandated reporter requirements, among others.

Most of the materials are currently available in Spanish, Polish, and Arabic, and can be translated into other languages as needed or upon request, ensuring that all individuals can access essential information regardless of their primary language.

In addition, the DCFS website is available in six languages in addition to English to further promote accessibility and compliance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act.

SECTION 6: LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services is committed to providing ongoing employment development and training on language access to maintain well-trained bilingual employees, general staff, and all staff who interact with or may interact with individuals with LEP receive ongoing professional development and training on language access policies, procedures, and responsibilities. This section outlines the type of language access training to provide all DCFS staff as well as specific training responsibilities for bilingual or multilingual employees, frontline staff, and other personnel who may interact with individuals with LEP. This section also identifies the timing, frequency, and delivery methods for how training shall be implemented across the agency and its divisions.

6.1 LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING PLAN

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires that state agencies develop and implement an ongoing employee development and training strategy to maintain well-trained bilingual employees

and general staff. This ensures that DCFS is equipped to deliver effective language assistance services.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

All DCFS and CWCA staff who provide direct client services are required to complete mandatory Burgos Consent Decree and Limited English Proficiency training annually. The Burgos/LEP training is also part of “Foundations” training for all new staff DCFS and CWCA staff who provide direct client service.

SECTION 7: CONCERN RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Concern Resolution Process Section of the Language Access Plan highlights the need for allowing public feedback on the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of language assistance services to address any concerns that arise. This section outlines how DCFS will develop and make publicly available a multilingual concern resolution form, collect and log complaints submitted by individuals with LEP and others and promptly investigate and address each concern in a timely manner. Additionally, this section describes how DCFS will track the resolution status of complaints to ensure transparency and accountability and coordinate with the ONA when appropriate to support compliance and continuous improvement.

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires state agencies to establish and make publicly available a process for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and members of the public to submit concerns related to access to language assistance services. Section 15(b)(5) of the Act requires each state agency to develop an internal complaint and review process specific to the provision of language assistance services. Complaints that are not resolved in a timely or satisfactory manner may be referred to the Governor’s Office of New Americans for further review, per Section 30(c) of the Act.

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

In accordance with the Language Equity and Access Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 the Department has issued the CFS 766-2 Language Access Complaint Form. This form is used to file a complaint when a client believes their access to language services has been denied or restricted, or when they feel they did not have meaningful access to the Department’s programs, benefits, or services due to their inability—or perceived inability—to speak, write, or understand English.

The form is available on the Department’s website and in the Template Drive accessible to all DCFS staff, provided in the top six languages spoken in Illinois: Spanish, Arabic, Polish, Haitian French, Russian, and Swahili.

The CFS 766-2 Language Access Complaint Form includes instructions on how to file a language access complaint. The steps are as follows:

1. **Initiating a Complaint:**

A complaint may be initiated either verbally or in writing and must be filed within 180 days of the incident that is the basis of the complaint.

- **Verbal Complaints:** If a complaint is made verbally, the client should contact the language access coordinator, who will complete the CFS 766-2 form on their behalf.
- **Written Complaints:** If the complaint is made in writing, the client should complete the CFS 766-2 Language Access Complaint Form.

2. **Assistance:**

DCFS or CWCA staff will assist individuals in contacting the language access coordinator or in obtaining and completing the form if requested.

3. **Submission and Investigation:**

The completed form shall be submitted to the language access coordinator, who will investigate the complaint. The investigation may include reviewing documents and conducting interviews with individuals involved in the client's case.

4. **Recommendation and Resolution:**

Within 30 working days of receiving a completed form, the language access coordinator will provide a written recommendation to the responsible DCFS deputy director or CWCA personnel. The coordinator will work with the client and other parties to resolve any issues related to access to language services or other DCFS programs, particularly if access has been restricted due to the client's inability—or perceived inability—to speak, write, or understand English.

5. **Notification and External Filing:**

The client will be notified of the results of the investigation. If the client is not satisfied with the outcome, they may file the complaint with an outside agency, such as:

- The Governor's Office of New Americans
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights
- Illinois Department of Human Rights

As part of implementing the Language Equity and Access Act, the Department is currently developing a policy to formalize the process for resolving language access complaints. The policy is still in its draft stage; however, it is intended to provide clear guidance on complaint submission, investigation, resolution, and coordination with external agencies if necessary. The Department plans to complete this policy in Fiscal Year 2026.

SECTION 8: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting section of the Language Access Plan outlines the implementation and procedures DCFS will implement to assess compliance with the Illinois Equity and Access Act and evaluate the effectiveness of this Language Access Plan and its action items. This section will outline current practices and procedures for monitoring and collecting language access data, analyzing language use and language assistance needs, procedures for collecting and participating in community engagement/community feedback sessions to gather input on

improvements to the Language Access Plan and language assistance service, and evaluating the quality of language assistance services offered by DCFS.

8.1 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING PLAN

Overview of Standard

In accordance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, DCFS will coordinate with the Governor's Office of New Americans to review and monitor the implementation of its Language Access Plan and ensure ongoing compliance with the Act.

DCFS will conduct an individualized assessment of language assistance needs and patterns of language use on an ongoing basis and incorporate updated data and performance metrics into each new iteration of the Language Access Plan, as required under Section 25(d)(3). The agency will use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of current policies and practices and to inform continuous improvement of language access services.

The plan will include the ongoing review of statewide and agency-specific data on limited English proficient (LEP) populations, including demographic shifts and the identification of new or emerging language needs, as outlined in the state's Language Needs Assessment Report. The monitoring and evaluation plan will also track progress on the implementation of Language Access Plan goals, review expenditures related to language assistance services and assess whether projected changes in costs require budget adjustments or modifications to service delivery methods. Data will be collected and reviewed using the following methods:

Current DCFS Systems and Practices

DCFS currently receives three annual reports from our language access vendors: Propio Language Line, InterpreNet LLC for in-person interpretation and Multilingual Connections for written translation. These reports are very detailed, providing DCFS with information about services provided in over 40 languages, the duration of service provided in each language and where the request originated. This allows us to determine if bilingual staff are needed in different areas of the state. In addition, DCFS has a database called Power-BI which can produce a monthly report that reflects all children and youth in DCFS care, their primary language, where the child is placed and if the child is assigned a bilingual caseworker (as needed). This also assists the Department in determining where bilingual staff is needed.

DCFS has a Child Welfare Administrative Review process, where each family/child has a review of their goals written into a service plan and the family is provided a copy. The review is conducted in person and the administrative case reviewer writes feedback of findings. The lack of services in the family's primary language is documented in the feedback and provided to the language access coordinator for follow-up.

The DCFS Office of Budget and Finance provides a report of expenditures covering bilingual staff hires, bilingual recruitment, language line and written translation and bilingual reimbursement to

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Language Access Plan

Child Welfare Contributing Agencies for their bilingual case carrying staff. DCFS currently reimburses private agencies over \$6000 per certified bilingual caseworker.

DCFS currently has a language survey which is sent to all DCFS staff asking them to state what languages other than English they speak and the proficiency in the stated language.

DCFS uses U.S. Census demographic data and data from the Illinois State Board of Education to track changes in Illinois' limited English proficient population.

DCFS is developing a comprehensive Language Access Policy to enhance services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Building on existing practices, including the Burgos Decree for Spanish-speaking clients, the policy will extend language access to individuals who speak any language other than English or Spanish.

Key elements of the policy include:

- Definitions and guidance on LEP terms and vital documents.
- Procedures for staff to identify clients' primary language, assess language assistance needs, and inform clients of their rights to receive services and documents in their language.
- Clear steps to obtain interpretation and translation services.
- Instructions for filing complaints if clients believe language access has been denied or restricted.

This policy is still in draft form but is intended to strengthen the Department's ability to provide meaningful access to all LEP individuals. DCFS aims to finalize the policy by Fiscal Year 2026, ensuring consistent implementation across programs and services

SECTION 9: RESOURCES

- Illinois Language Access Toolkit

SECTION 10: APPENDIX

9.1 APPENDIX 1: FACTOR 1 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



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