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Williamson County District Courts  
Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan  
for Court Proceedings

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*Jose David*  
District Clerk, Williamson Co., TX.

**I. Legal Basis and Purpose**

This document serves as the plan for the Williamson County District Courts to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d *et seq.*; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 *et seq.*; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101–42.112), and other relevant state and federal law. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Williamson County District Courts.

This LEP plan was developed to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency. Although court interpreters are provided for persons with a hearing loss, access services for them are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore will not be addressed in this plan.

**II. Needs Assessment**

The Williamson County District Courts will make every effort to provide services to all LEP persons. However, the following list shows the foreign languages that are most frequently used in the courts' geographic area.

- Spanish – Spanish is the primary language spoken at home in 14.5% of households in Williamson County.

This information is based on data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau through the 2020 American Community Survey<sup>1</sup>. This plan is intended to address access to any LEP group that constitutes 5% of the community or more than 1,000 people.

**III. Language Assistance Resources**

**(a) Interpreters Used in the Courtroom**

**1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom**

The Williamson County District Courts intend to provide spoken-language interpreters in court proceedings in accordance with both state and federal law and will seek necessary resources to fulfill those obligations.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey; found at:  
[https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP02&q=0400000US48\\_0500000US48491](https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP02&q=0400000US48_0500000US48491) (last accessed on 7/31/2023).

## **2. Determining the Need for an Interpreter in the Courtroom**

The Williamson County District Courts may determine whether a LEP person needs an interpreter for a court hearing in various ways.

In a case where the court is mandated to provide an interpreter, but one is not available at the time of the proceeding, even after the court has made all reasonable efforts to locate one, as previously outlined in this plan, the case may be postponed and continued on a date when an interpreter can be provided.

## **3. Court Interpreter Qualifications**

The Williamson County District Courts hire interpreters for courtroom hearings in compliance with the rules and policies set forth by the Texas Government Code, Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, and Texas Rules of Civil Procedure. The Texas Office of Court Administration maintains a searchable database of Licensed Court Interpreters in the State of Texas. This database may be found at <https://www.txcourts.gov/lap/>. For hearings where the court is not required to utilize a Texas licensed court interpreter, the Courts may utilize telephonic interpreting services where appropriate.

## **4. Requesting an Interpreter**

The Williamson County District Courts have designated their Court Administrators as the primary point of contact for all LEP services. All courthouse staff will be trained to direct anyone inquiring about LEP services to the Court Administrator of the Court in which the matter is assigned.

Litigants, witnesses, or attorneys who have a need for an interpreter should contact the appropriate Court Chambers as soon as they are aware of the need to request an interpreter for a courtroom proceeding. Every effort will be made to ensure the presence of an interpreter for the proceeding as requested. If an interpreter is not available for the proceeding, and telephonic interpreting services are not appropriate, the courtroom proceeding will be delayed until an interpreter is available.

### **(b) Language Services Outside the Courtroom**

The Williamson County District Courts are taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to court-related services outside the courtroom. This is perhaps the most challenging situation facing court staff, because in most situations they are charged with assisting LEP individuals without an interpreter present. LEP individuals may come in contact with court personnel via the phone, the public counter, or other means.

The most common points of service outside the courtroom are with court staff. The court can utilize bilingual staff when available to assist when needed.

To facilitate communication between LEP individuals and court staff, the Williamson County District Courts use the following resources to the degree that resources are available and appropriate:

- Court interpreters, to the extent permitted under an active memorandum of understanding or independent interpreter contract;

- Bilingual employees;
- Bilingual volunteers; and
- Language Line or similar interpretation/translation service.

**(c) Translated Forms and Documents**

The Williamson County District Courts understand the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the courts' services. Interpreters at court hearings are expected to provide sight translations of court documents and correspondence associated with the case.

**IV. Court Staff and Volunteer Recruitment**

**(a) Bilingual Staff for Language Access**

Williamson County is an equal opportunity employer and often hires bilingual staff to serve LEP persons. When available, bilingual staff are able to assist with contacts from LEP individuals, as needed.

**(b) Volunteers for Language Access**

The Court may attempt to use volunteers to assist with language access in the following areas:

- To assist in interpreting for LEP individuals outside of the courtroom.

**V. Judicial and Staff Training**

The Williamson County District Courts are committed to providing LEP training opportunities for all judicial officers and court staff. Training and learning opportunities offered by the Williamson County District Courts will be expanded as needed, and will include:

- Cultural competency training;
- LEP Plan Training; and
- Judicial officer orientation on the use of court interpreters and language competency.

**VI. Public Outreach and Education**

To communicate with the court's LEP persons on various legal issues of importance to the community and to make them aware of services available to all language speakers, the Williamson County District Courts seek input from the LEP community to further improve services. To support LEP persons, the Courts will develop a bilingual brochure that explains how LEP persons can access interpretation services when appropriate. Included in that brochure will be instructions for providing feedback on LEP issues.

**VII. Plan Notification and Ongoing Evaluation of LEP Plan**

**(a) LEP Plan Notification**

Once approved, copies of the LEP plan will be provided to the public on request and will be posted on the District Courts public website.

**(b) LEP Plan Review and Evaluation**

The Williamson County District Courts will routinely assess whether changes to the LEP plan are needed. The plan will remain in effect unless modified or updated.

The judges will review the effectiveness of the LEP periodically and update it as necessary. This may include identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. Elements of this evaluation may include, but are not limited to:

- State of funding for court interpreters and language assistance;
- Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided;
- Assessment of feedback on effectiveness of the elements of the plan; and
- Review of feedback from employees on LEP experiences.

**VIII. Approval and Effective Date**

The Williamson County Limited English Proficiency Plan is approved effective February 1, 2024 by the Williamson County District Judges.



Hon. Betsy Lambeth  
Judge, 425<sup>th</sup> District Court  
Local Admin. District Judge



Hon. Donna King  
Judge, 26<sup>th</sup> District Court



Hon. Stacey Mathews  
Judge, 277<sup>th</sup> District Court



Hon. Sarah Bruchmiller  
Judge, 368<sup>th</sup> District Court



Hon. Ryan Larson  
Judge, 395<sup>th</sup> District Court



Hon. Scott Field  
Judge, 480<sup>th</sup> District Court