



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2002-22
September 27, 2002

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: Right to an Interpreter

Overview

The Department, in conformance with federal law, is required to tell applicants and recipients of their right to interpretation services and provide interpreters to applicants and recipients whose primary language is not English or who use American Sign Language (ASL).

Interpretation services must be made available to non-English speaking applicants and recipients and American Sign Language (ASL) users who call or come to a Transitional Assistance Office (TAO). Applicants and recipients who do not speak English, whose primary language is not English or who are ASL users must not be turned away and told to return with their own interpreter.

While every effort must be made to serve the applicant and recipient, if a bilingual AU Manager, designated by the TAO Director, or a TAO Interpreter who speaks the applicant's or recipient's language is not available, an appointment must be given within the appropriate time frames to return at a time when the TAO is able to provide interpretation services.

If an applicant or recipient calls or comes to a TAO and prefers to use the services of his or her own interpreter, he or she is allowed to do so.

**AU Manager
Responsibilities**

If a designated bilingual AU Manager or a TAO Interpreter who speaks the applicant's or recipient's language:

- *is available*, the applicant or recipient must be seen when he or she comes to the TAO and not told to return another day; or
- *is not available*, the TAO Director or designee must be informed. The TAO director, following procedures below, must try to schedule an interpreter. If an interpreter cannot be scheduled, the applicant or recipient must be given an appointment to return at a time when the TAO is able to provide interpretation services.

All applicants and recipients must be given the *I Speak* card (*FSP-LC Rev. 2/91*) and the *Your Right to Interpreter Services* brochure in the appropriate language.

Important: An applicant's immediate needs must always be addressed in accordance with Department policy.

**TAO Director or
Designee
Responsibilities**

If a designated bilingual AU Manager or a TAO Interpreter who speaks the applicant's or recipient's language is not available, the TAO Director or designee must request an interpreter through a local community service agency, Gen Cormier in the Department's Human Resources Office at 617-348-5979, or if there are no other available options, the Telelanguage line for offices with access to it.

If an interpreter is needed for an emergency situation, the AU Manager must inform the TAO Director or designee responsible for obtaining the services of an interpreter.

Any TAO may access interpreter services from all TAO interpreters regardless of the specific location where the designated TAO interpreter is physically located. If a TAO needs interpreter services from a TAO interpreter located in another TAO, then the TAO Director or designee must notify the appropriate contact person listed on the Department's TAO interpreters list to arrange for interpreter services.

References

TAFDC and EAEDC - 106 CMR 701.360.
Food Stamps Program - 106 CMR 360.510.

**Obsolete
Material**

Field Operations Memo 99-31 is obsolete.

Questions

If you have any questions, have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.
