

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
2013 Language Access Plan

I. Introduction and Purpose

The Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) has prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP” or “Plan”), to ensure meaningful access to Department proceedings and services for consumers who have limited English proficiency. This Plan is intended to comply with the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (“ANF”) Administrative Bulletin #16.

Consistent with the guidance of ANF Administrative Bulletin #16, a Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) person is someone who is not able to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that allows him/her to interact effectively with Department staff. A consumer may identify himself or herself as a LEP person.

II. Agency Description

The Department regulates the rates and services of investor-owned and operated electric, gas and water utility companies, and certain common carriers in the transportation industry. The Department investigates and resolves billing and service quality complaints from the residential customers of regulated utility companies. The Department licenses common carriers of transportation including moving and tow companies, as well as licensing school bus drivers. The Department is an adjudicatory agency and, as such, holds legal proceedings pursuant to G.L. c. 30A. Many legal proceedings involve a public hearing to provide consumers with an opportunity to be heard on the rates and services of utility companies.

III. Language Access Plan:

(1) The Plan shall be implemented subject to the availability of fiscal resources.

The Department’s Language Access Coordinators are:

Kate McKeever
Chief of Staff
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station Boston, MA 02110
Kate.mckeever@state.ma.us
617 305-3736

Nancy Stevens
Director of Consumer
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station Boston, MA 02110
Nancy.stevens@state.ma.us
617 -305-3745

(2) The Department has one office located at One South Station, Boston, serving the entire Commonwealth. Therefore, the language composition of the consumer population reflects the language composition of the entire Commonwealth.

(3) The Department has two primary points of contact with the general public.

First, the Department's Consumer Division has daily contact with the general public. The Consumer Division receives consumer calls on a toll free line and has Spanish- and English-speaking staff answering calls. The Consumer Division's automated telephone system allows consumers to opt for Spanish-language recordings and/or Spanish-speaking staff.

Second, the Department's Legal Division has contact with the general public during the public hearings held pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, the Administrative Procedures Act. For each public hearing held in a service territory rather than in the Boston office, the Department will assess whether interpreters are needed to provide language access to LEPs. The assessment will be based upon the percentage of non-English speaking residents of the service territory and a subjective judgment about the level of interest in the local community in attending the public hearing.

(4) Annually, the Department shall request that staff voluntarily identify themselves as proficient, fluent or bilingual in any language other than English, and willing to serve as interpreters as needed .

(5) The Department will use in-house staff for interpreter services whenever possible. If in-house resources are unavailable, the Department will seek interpreter services from a community-based organization located in the same service territory as the site of the public hearing.

(6) The Department will hold a technical session to consult with stakeholders on the need for the translation of documents; website content posted by the Department; and the availability of interpreters at public hearings.

(7) The Department will perform an annual, internal review and evaluation of the Plan.

(8) Complaints regarding the language accessibility of Department adjudicatory proceedings and general information shall contact:

Kate McKeever
Chief of Staff
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station Boston, MA 02110
Kate.mckeever@state.ma.us

Nancy Stevens
Director of Consumer
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station Boston, MA 02110
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Ann Berwick, Chairman
January 31, 2013

Secretary
Date:

Language Access Complaint Procedure

You may file a complaint with the Agency Language Access Coordinator or the Office of Access and Opportunity if you believe you have been denied the benefits of this Plan. You must file your complaint within 6 months of the alleged denial. You must file a written complaint. To file a complaint with the Language Access Coordinator, submit the written complaint to:

Kate McKeever
Chief of Staff
Department of Public Utilities
One South Station Boston, MA 02110
Kate.mckeever@state.ma.us

To file a complaint with the Office of Access and Opportunity, please submit the written complaint to the attention of:

Office of Access and Opportunity
Executive Office of Administration and Finance
State House, Room 373
Boston, MA 02133
Email Address: Ronald.Marlow@state.ma.us