



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Health and Human Services*  
*Department of Transitional Assistance*  
*600 Washington Street • Boston MA 02111*


Argeo Paul Cellucci  
Governor

William D. O'Leary  
Secretary

Jane Swift  
Lieutenant Governor

Claire McIntire  
Commissioner

**Field Operations Memo 99-31**  
**October 6, 1999**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff  
**From:**  Joyce Sampson, Assistance Commissioner for Field Operations  
**Re:** Right to an Interpreter

**Overview**

The Department, in conformance with federal law, informs applicants and recipients of their right to interpretation services and provides 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 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.** If a bilingual Transitional Assistance Worker or an interpreter who speaks the applicant's or recipient's language is not available, applicants or recipients should be given an appointment 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.

**Transitional Assistance Workers Responsibilities**

All applicants and recipients, whose primary language is not English or who use ASL, should be given the *I Speak* card and the *Your Right to Interpreter Services* brochure in the appropriate language.

If a bilingual Transitional Assistance Worker is available who speaks the language of the non-English speaking or ASL applicant or recipient, the applicant or recipient **must** be seen when he or she comes to the TAO and not told to return another day.

**Transitional  
Assistance  
Workers  
Responsibilities  
(cont.)**

If there is no bilingual worker available, the Transitional Assistance Worker should ask the Transitional Assistance Office Director or designee to request an interpreter through a local community service, the Department's Human Resource Office, or if there are no other available options, the AT&T Language Line for offices with access to it.

If an interpreter is needed for an emergency situation, the Transitional Assistance Worker should inform the Transitional Assistance Office Director or designee who is responsible for obtaining the services of an interpreter.

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**References**

TAFDC and EAEDC - 106 CMR 701.360

Food Stamp Program - 106 CMR 360.510

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**Obsolete Material**

Obsolete Field Operations Memo 93-3: Providing Interpreters for Non-English Speaking Applicants and Recipients.

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**Questions**

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

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