

Guidelines for Written Translations SY2018-19

Background Information¹

What steps must school districts take to provide effective language assistance to LEP parents?




- School districts must provide effective language assistance to limited English proficient parents, such as by offering translated materials or a language interpreter. Language assistance must be free and provided by appropriate and competent staff, or through appropriate and competent outside resources.
- School districts should ensure that interpreters and translators have knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts to be used in the communication at issue, and are trained on the role of an interpreter and translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality.
- It is not sufficient for the staff merely to be bilingual. For example, a staff member who is bilingual may be able to communicate directly with limited English proficient parents in a different language, but may not be competent to interpret in and out of that language, or to translate documents.

May my child's school ask my child, other students, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for me?

No. Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents.

¹U.S. Department of Justice (*Civil Rights Division*) and U.S. Department of Education (*Office for Civil Rights*) *Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them.*
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-lep-parents-201501.pdf>

ACPS Guidelines for Written Translations

<p><i>Appropriate for Translation</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vital information that is division-wide or school-wide to facilitate meaningful communication between ACPS and families.• All communications seeking the involvement of parents in their children's education.
<p><i>Consider for Translation</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal/state documents containing vital information. Prior to submitting a request the requestor is responsible for checking if translated versions exist. If not, the entire document must be reviewed to identify which specific parts of the document require translation.• IEP's content, social case history meetings, Eligibility meetings must be translated orally (interpreted); however, templates for the forms being used can be translated.
<p><i>Inappropriate for Translation</i></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal documents not for distribution to families.• Copyrighted materials (unless accompanied by written permission from the publisher/author).• Instructional (classroom) materials.

Examples of Vital Documents Appropriate for Translation

- Examples include:
 - Information regarding achievement on academic assessments.
 - Annual State and local educational agency report cards (templates).
 - Disciplinary letters, notices and procedures (specifically the event).
 - Registration/enrollment forms, emergency notification form and other forms, most commonly used by the district to communicate with parents.
 - Information related to school and parent programs, meetings and other activities and notifications of the districts parental involvement policy.
 - Parent teacher conferences date notifications.
 - Parents handbooks, fact sheets and newsletters.
 - Procedures related to parents rights to receive procedural safeguards in the context of providing children with disabilities with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
 - Special Education letters, forms, brochures and templates (consent forms, notices, assessments).
 - Understanding of school/ division rules and procedures; policies and regulations; code of conduct.
 - Access to functions or co-curricular activities.
 - Assurance of students health and safety.
 - Academic options and planning, including talented and gifted programs, alternative language programs, and counseling and guidance services.
 - Gifted education forms, letters and brochures.
 - Access to programs of services contributing to academic success.
 - Information on the availability of supplemental educational services and brief description of the services.
 - Communications (Crisis Management brochure; inclement weather messages).

How and When to Request Translation for a Vital Document

- All translation requests need to be submitted through the ACPS online Vital Document Translation Request form found here: <https://www.acps.k12.va.us/translation>
- Translations need to be requested with feasibility. In other words, requests must be made **at least ten (10) school days in advance** of the translation need date.
 - Please note that the time needed and delivery date may vary depending on the length and difficulty of the document(s). For example, documents with multiple text boxes, hard returns within paragraphs, and multiple graphics are more complex and require additional time as extra formatting is required.
 - Translations received after business hours and/or on non-school days will be placed in the queue the following day in which students are in school.

Prepare Vital Documents for Translation

1. Vital Document Version and Format

- Documents submitted for written translation must be in their final version (**not in draft form or pending approval**).
- Documents for translation must be submitted in an editable format.
 - MS Word and MS PowerPoint are acceptable.
 - PDFs and speciality program documents (such as InDesign) are not acceptable.
 - Scanned copies are not accepted because they are not editable.
- “Track Changes” must be disabled.

2. Review Vital Documents Prior to Submitting Request

- To ensure accuracy and quality in all translations, prior to submitting a document for translation, school/department staff should thoroughly review English materials to assess whether information is well written, clear and accurate, and using simple language that is easily translatable.
 - **Plain language:** ACPS documents should follow principles of plain language, which include the following:
 - Elimination of nonessential information
 - Familiar words with clear meanings; avoid or explain jargon, technical terms, abbreviations and acronyms, redundant phrases, contradictions, colloquialisms, idioms and metaphors
 - Use of simple sentences: avoid wordy phrases and unnecessary synonyms
 - Consistent, accurate punctuation and capitalization
 - Use of short paragraphs
 - **Readability:** Determine if the educational material you produce is written at a level that exceeds your audience’s ability to understand it.
 - **Cultural competency:** Make sure your message is culturally informed. Think about whether the concept you are presenting exists in other cultures. If you are unsure if your material is culturally appropriate, you should test your messaging and images with a community partner that works with that population or a member of the target audience.

Avoid idiomatic expressions or colloquialisms (that is, expressions or sayings that do not have the same meaning in other languages/cultures). If certain text is unavoidable, identify and define the text in the “Additional Comments” section of the online Vital Documents Translation Request Form.

3. Vital Documents Previously Translated

- Documents that have been previously translated only need to be updated and not completely translated. In these cases, the requestor must:
 - highlight the updated information in the new document (what needs to be translated) and
 - attach the previous translations to be used as a reference.