

## DISTRICT 196 LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN and Regulation 801.12AR

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**District 196 Mission:** *Educating, developing, and inspiring our students for lifelong success.*

District 196 provides educational opportunities for students to pursue their infinite possibilities in early childhood, K-12, adult and community education programs for lifelong learners of all ages. District 196 serves residents in Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan, Burnsville, Coates, Empire, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville and Vermillion Township in Dakota County, Minnesota. For more information, visit [www.District196.org](http://www.District196.org).

Consistent quality communication between families and school staff is critical to support student learning at school and home. The District 196 Language Access Plan and Regulation helps ensure district staff provide language services to families who are not English speakers to eliminate barriers to accessing services, programs and activities offered by the district. Providing equitable access to all students and families requires the use of language access services.

### **Outline**

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## **Purpose and Authority**

This Language Access Plan is intended to comply with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), which prohibits discrimination based on race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

The United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, in collaboration with the [United States Department of Justice](#), provided guidance <sup>1</sup> and information for parents and guardians with limited English language proficiency and for the schools and school districts that communicate with them.

Under this guidance, school districts must communicate vital information to families in a language they understand. This is necessary for them to make well-informed decisions about their children's education. Given the critical role parents and guardians play in their child's education, the school system must seek to overcome the language barriers through free language access services in the form of interpretation and translation.

The Language Access Plan guides District 196 staff on how to provide information and services to parents and guardians who do not speak English or have limited English proficiency. By providing consistent quality communication between schools and families, knowing and appreciating various cultural backgrounds, and understanding how to effectively use language services, families can be actively involved in their children's education, regardless of what language they speak.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Information for limited English proficient \(LEP\) parents and guardians and for schools and school districts that communicate with them"](#), U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division & U.S. Department of Education for Civil Rights

## **Definitions**

**Multilingual Families** are proficient in languages other than English and may need language assistance.<sup>2</sup>

**Interpretation** is the process of orally rendering a spoken or signed communication from one language into another language. There are different modes of interpreting, including consecutive, simultaneous and sight interpretation. Examples of interpretation include over-the-phone interpreting (OPI), video-remote interpreting (VRI) and in-person interpreting (spoken and/or ASL).

**Primary language** is the language used at home most often. When the District 196 Language Access Plan was drafted in 2023, the most common primary languages in the district were English, Spanish and Somali, in that order.

**Translation** is converting written text from one language into written text in another, maintaining the original material's intended meaning. Translation is a written medium but is often misused to mean interpretation. An example of translation is sending home a document in a parent's preferred language.

**Bilingual staff** are district staff members who speak two or more languages fluently.

**Qualified staff** are district staff who have met and demonstrated the minimum linguistic proficiency and fluency for purposes of interpreting. They have completed a 40-hour interpreter training, understand the role of the interpreter and abide by the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of Interpreters.

**Qualified interpreters** are professionals with experience in interpretation techniques, have completed a 40-hour interpreter training, understand the role of the interpreter and abide by the National Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of Interpreters. They are knowledgeable in educational vocabulary to effectively facilitate communication between two or more people who do not share a common language.

**Vital documents** are any materials essential to a family's ability to access services provided by District 196. These include but are not limited to language assistance programs, safety plans, special education and related services, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, grievance procedures, notices of nondiscrimination, student discipline policies and procedures, registration and enrollment, report cards, letters or notices that require a response from families, requests for permission for student participation in district or school activities, parent-teacher conferences, parent handbooks, gifted and talented programs, and other school and program choice options. Vital documents are translated into Spanish and Somali, the two most common languages used in District 196 after English.

**Point to Your Language** and **We Can Help You In Your Language** posters are noticeably located at entrances to all district buildings.

**Preferred language** is a native language or any other language with which the parent or guardian requests interpretation services and/or communication from schools and the district.

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<sup>2</sup> While many multilingual families are proficient in English and do not require language assistance, the use of the term "Multilingual Families" in this plan is intended to describe those families who may need assistance.

**Language Access Plan** is a written document that describes how District 196 provides services to individuals who have a preferred language other than English.

**Language Services** facilitate communication between speakers of different languages, typically involving interpretation (oral) and/or translation (written) services.

### **Meaningful Access**

No person will be denied access to any District 196 programs, activities or services based on preferred language. District 196 staff will use the appropriate language services, at no cost to families, to ensure all families have access to District 196 services, programs and activities.

### **Parent Identification**

Upon initial enrollment, and as needed throughout a student's education in District 196, schools identify parents and guardians who need language access services and inform them (in their preferred language) about the language services available to them in the district. Schools maintain preferred language data in the District 196 student information system, Infinite Campus.

### **Language Assistance Procedures**

- School office staff are usually the first contact for persons requiring language assistance. Staff notify them of their right to an interpreter (at no cost) and tools such as the "Point to Your Language" poster and Over-the-Phone Interpreting Line.
- Families may request language assistance in person, by email, by phone or by accessing our language assistance requests on the district website.
- Staff may request bilingual and/or qualified staff members to help with families with limited English proficiency.

### **Interpretation and Translation Services**

All interpretation and translation will be provided by qualified interpreters. District 196 will take reasonable steps to ensure that interpreters, whether a staff member or independent contractor, have knowledge of specific educational terms and concepts, and have received training in the role, ethics and standards of an interpreter, and the need to maintain confidentiality.

The district Communications Department maintains master contracts with qualified vendors of spoken language interpreters and translation services. These vendors offer in-person, video-remote interpretation and telephone interpreting, as well as translation services. Rates and availability vary by language, vendor and the urgency of the request. District 196 staff can access the list of contracted vendors in the [Multilingual Resources folder](#).

#### **[Interpretation](#)**

Scheduling in-person interpreter services requires planning. Staff should schedule interpreters at least one week before they are needed, whenever possible. Staff can access the list of district-approved interpreters or outside agencies in the [Multilingual Resource folder](#).

***Reliance on untrained students, siblings, friends, or untrained staff to translate or interpret is not acceptable***<sup>3</sup>. Students should not be used as intermediaries in communicating information to parents and guardians, as the information being interpreted is often beyond a child's comprehension and may lead to inaccurate or incomplete information. Students may interpret only in emergency situations. Similarly, untrained adults should not provide interpretation or translation services to families.

**On-Demand, Telephone and Video Interpretation Services** offer interpretation in many languages and are charged on a per-minute basis. These should not be used for IEP and student behavior meetings. For these meetings, a face-to-face interpreter should be scheduled. [More information about on-demand services](#).

### **Translation**

Translating educational materials requires knowledge of a specialized vocabulary of commonly used terms related to curriculum programs and policies. [Vital documents and information should be a priority for translation](#). District 196 recommends that a trained person or an outside vendor (not an online translator application) translate vital information, whenever possible. Staff can access the list of district-approved translation services in the [Multilingual Resource folder](#).

Some families may not be able to read and understand written materials in their preferred language. Therefore, oral interpretation of written materials may be necessary. Staff assists families who cannot read their preferred language the same as they assist English-speaking families who cannot read English.

### **Translation Inquiries and Existing Translations**

Questions about districtwide communications should be directed to [languageservices@district196.org](mailto:languageservices@district196.org).

Many vital documents have already been translated into Spanish and Somali. To see if a document has already been translated, staff can access the [Multilingual Resource Folder](#). Some district policies, regulations and procedures are also translated and can be found on the [policy page](#) of the district website.

## **Notice of Language Services**

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<sup>3</sup> English LEP Parent Fact Sheet, Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them

Signage should be posted in visible locations in all district buildings notifying individuals of the right to request an interpreter at no cost to the individual. Staff also have a responsibility to inform all families of their right to a timely and complimentary interpreter and/or translation services.

[I Speak](#) cards, [We Can Help You in Your Language](#) posters and [Please Point to Your Language](#) posters are available to download from the [Multilingual Resources folder](#).

### **Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

All District 196 staff are responsible for monitoring compliance with the Language Access Plan and Regulation attached to this plan.

It is essential that all staff members understand their responsibility to provide meaningful and timely access to information about services and programs available to them, in their preferred language.

### **Review and Update**

The Language Access Plan is reviewed and evaluated annually by the Communications Department.

### **Complaint Process**

A complaint regarding the denial of language access services, or the quality of services provided, may be made in person emailed to [languageservices@district196.org](mailto:languageservices@district196.org) or mailed to ISD 196 District Office, Communications Department, 3455 153<sup>rd</sup> St. W., Rosemount, MN 55068.

[Regulation 801.12AR](#)