

# Language Access Ordinance Overview

*Presentation to the SFPD DGO 5.20  
Community Policy Working Group*

August 15, 2024

**OCEIA** SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE OF  
**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT  
& IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS**





# About OCEIA

The Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) is a policy, compliance, direct services and grantmaking City department.

OCEIA's mission is to promote inclusive policies and foster immigrant assistance programs that lead to full civic, economic and linguistic integration.

# Frequently Used Terms

## LAO - Language Access Ordinance

Administrative Code, Section 91, directs City agencies to ensure that public services and information are accessible to all people, regardless of language ability.

## LEP - Limited English Proficient

Term used to refer to people who do not speak English as a primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

## San Francisco's Required Languages

The LAO requires City departments to provide language access services in Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino. Languages are certified by OCEIA once they reach a population threshold of 10,000 LEP residents. **On January 1, 2026, the threshold will be lowered from 10,000 LEP residents to 6,000 LEP residents.**

# Interpretation vs. Translation



Interpretation is **spoken**

Translation is **written**



# LAO Amendments - Key Highlights

- Effective **January 1, 2026**, the LEP language population threshold will decrease from 10,000 people to 6,000 people. It is anticipated Vietnamese and/or other languages will become eligible for certification as required in 2026.
- Effective **January 1, 2025**, First Responder Departments (SF Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Emergency Management) are mandated to provide language assistance during emergencies in accordance with the recent updates to the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act. **\*Possible DGO Policy Impact**

\*Changes from the LAO Amendments are represented in **yellow** in the slides that follow.

# LAO Amendments - Key Highlights

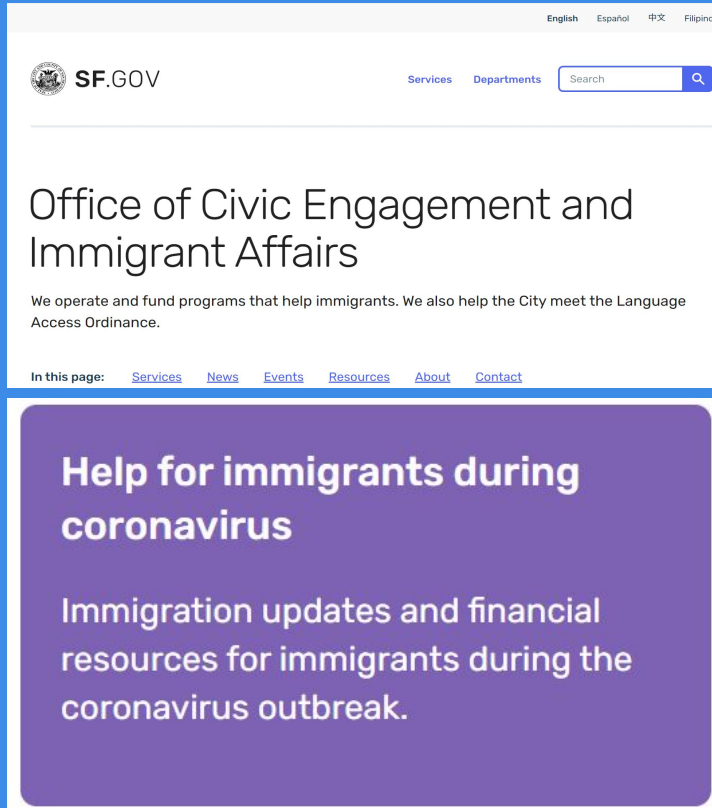
- Translation requirements for vital information apply to public signage and digital content (e.g. websites and social media). **\*Possible DGO Policy Impact**
- Departments must acknowledge receipt of a translation request within 48 business hours and share an update with the requester about anticipated completion time.  
**\*Possible DGO Policy Impact**
- The amendments clarify Department responsibilities to budget for and coordinate language access services.
- OCEIA will increase external reporting on language access complaints.

\*Changes from the LAO Amendments are represented in **yellow** in the slides that follow.

# Department Responsibilities

1. **Inform the public** about the right to request language assistance and provision for services.
2. Designate a **language access liaison**.
3. Develop an **internal language access policy**.
4. **Translate vital information** in required languages. **Acknowledge receipt of translation requests within 48 hours and share an update on anticipated translation completion time with requesters.**
5. Provide sufficient numbers of **bilingual employees**.
6. **Record multilingual** telephone messages.
7. **Provide interpretation** at public meetings and hearings.
8. **Track and monitor** interactions with LEP clients and capture what languages they occurred in.

# Services in Emergency Situations



English Español 中文 Filipino

SF.GOV Services Departments Search

## Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs

We operate and fund programs that help immigrants. We also help the City meet the Language Access Ordinance.

In this page: [Services](#) [News](#) [Events](#) [Resources](#) [About](#) [Contact](#)

### Help for immigrants during coronavirus

Immigration updates and financial resources for immigrants during the coronavirus outbreak.

- City departments are mandated to provide language assistance in emergency situations.
- If the emergency requires the posting of warning signs, the Department shall translate those signs in the required languages.
- **Starting on January 1, 2025, First Responder Departments (SF Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Emergency Management) are mandated to provide language assistance during emergencies in accordance with the recent updates to the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.**



# Spotlight on Translation

## *Vital information, services or programs*

- ✓ Complaint forms
- ✓ Application forms
- ✓ Notices about service eligibility
- ✓ Signs, brochures or flyers explaining services or programs
- ✓ Tests

Anything that affects: ***Rights, Benefits, Duties, and Privileges***

# Translation Requirements

## *Under LAO Amendments:*

- **Departments must acknowledge receipt of a translation request within 48 business hours.**
- **Departments also must share an update with the requester about when the translation will be completed.**
- **The translation requirements for vital information apply to publicly posted signage and digital content (e.g. websites and social media).**

# Stay connected with us:

## Additional questions?

- Email [language.access@sfgov.org](mailto:language.access@sfgov.org)
- Or call OCEIA at 415-581-2360

## Follow us on social media:

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