

physicians concerning whether, or on what terms, to contract with a payor. Paragraph II.C bars attempts to engage in any action prohibited by Paragraph II.A or II.B. Paragraph II.D proscribes inducing anyone to engage in any action prohibited by Paragraphs II.A through II.C.

As in other orders addressing providers' collective bargaining with health care purchasers, certain kinds of agreements are excluded from the general bar on joint negotiations.

First, WUPN would not be precluded from engaging in conduct that is reasonably necessary to form or participate in legitimate joint contracting arrangements among competing physicians, whether a "qualified risk-sharing joint arrangement" or a "qualified clinically-integrated joint arrangement." Second, WUPN would be permitted to enter into any agreement or engage in any conduct that only involves WU faculty members with respect to services provided by WU physicians.

As defined in the proposed order, a "qualified risk-sharing joint arrangement" possesses two key characteristics. First, all physician participants must share substantial financial risk through the arrangement, such that the arrangement creates incentives for the participants to control costs and improve quality by managing the provision of services. Second, any agreement concerning reimbursement or other terms or conditions of dealing must be reasonably necessary to obtain significant efficiencies through the joint arrangement.

A "qualified clinically-integrated joint arrangement," on the other hand, need not involve any sharing of financial risk. Instead, as defined in the proposed order, physician participants must participate in active and ongoing programs to evaluate and modify their clinical practice patterns in order to control costs and ensure the quality of services provided, and the arrangement must create a high degree of interdependence and cooperation among physicians. As with qualified risk-sharing arrangements, any agreement concerning price or other terms of dealing must be reasonably necessary to achieve the efficiency goals of the joint arrangement.

Paragraphs III.A and III.B require WUPN to send notice of the order and complaint to all WUPN participating physicians, WUPN employees and principals, and all payors WUPN has contacted since January 1, 1998, concerning the provision of physician services. Paragraph III.C. requires WUPN to terminate, without penalty,

any preexisting contract with a payor upon receipt of a payor's written request to terminate the contract. This provision is intended to eliminate the effects of WUPN's anticompetitive actions.

Paragraph III.D of the proposed order requires WUPN to distribute the order and complaint prospectively to new members, newly contracted payors, and new employees for a period of three years, and Paragraphs IV through VI set out WUPN's requirements to report or provide access to information to the Commission to facilitate monitoring of WUPN's compliance with the order.

The proposed order will expire in 20 years.

By direction of the Commission.

Donald S. Clark,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 03-18744 Filed 7-22-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6750-01-P

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

National Travel Forum 2004: Traveling on the Frontier of Change (NTF 2004)

AGENCY: Office of Governmentwide Policy, General Services Administration (GSA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The General Services Administration (GSA) is announcing that it will hold its third national travel forum. The National Travel Forum 2004: Traveling on the Frontier of Change (NTF 2004) will take place June 28-July 1, 2004 at the Wyndham Anatole in Dallas, Texas. Nearly 1,500 travel, relocation, financial and other professionals within Federal, State, and local governments, as well as the private sector will attend. Much of the focus will be on the governmentwide eTravel Service (eTS), the Federal Premier Lodging Program (FPLP), and revised relocation regulations. Best practices in Government travel and relocation services, as well as many other topics will be discussed. To attend, exhibit, or hold an agency-wide meeting, visit the NTF 2004 Web site at <http://www.nationaltravelforum.org>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rick Freda, Office of Governmentwide Policy, at (202) 219-3500, or by e-mail to Rick.Freda@gsa.gov.

Dated: July 18, 2003.

Peggy DeProspero,

Director, Travel Management Policy.

[FR Doc. 03-18751 Filed 7-22-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6820-24-P

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

[2003-N04]

Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons

AGENCIES: Office of Civil Rights, General Services Administration (GSA).

ACTION: Notice of interim final policy guidance document.

SUMMARY: The General Services Administration (GSA) is publishing for public comment interim final policy guidance on Title VI's prohibition against national origin discrimination as it affects limited English proficient (LEP) persons. This guidance will become final after a 30-day comment period unless GSA determines that the comments require further modification to the guidance. Once final, this policy guidance will supplant the policy guidance published on January 17, 2001.

DATES: Submit comments on or before August 22, 2003. GSA will review all comments and will determine what modifications, if any, to this policy guidance are necessary. Because this guidance must adhere to the Federal-wide compliance standards and framework detailed in the model U.S. Department of Justice's LEP guidance, GSA specifically solicits comments on the nature, scope, and appropriateness of the GSA-specific examples set out in this guidance explaining and/or highlighting how those consistent Federal-wide compliance standards are applicable to recipients of Federal financial assistance through GSA.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons should submit written comments to Ms. Regina Budd, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Civil Rights, General Services Administration, 1800 F Street, NW., Suite 5127, Washington, DC 20405. Comments may also be submitted by facsimile at (202) 219-3369 or at e-mail OCR@gsa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Regulatory Secretariat, Room 4035, GS Building, Washington, DC, 20405, (202) 208-7312, for information pertaining to status or publication schedules. For clarification of content, contact Ms. Evelyn Britton at the Office of Civil Rights, General Services Administration, 1800 F Street, NW., Washington, DC 20405. Telephone (202) 501-0767; 1-800-662-6376; TDD 1-888-267-7660.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of this policy guidance is to further clarify the responsibilities of recipients of Federal financial assistance from GSA and assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities to limited English proficient (LEP) persons, pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and GSA implementing regulations. The policy guidance explains that to avoid discrimination against LEP persons on the ground of national origin, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information those recipients provide, free of charge.

GSA's guidance for recipients was originally published on January 17, 2001, and became effective immediately. (See 66 FR 4026.) That document, like the following guidance, was based on policy guidance issued by the Department of Justice entitled "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency." (See 65 FR 50123, August 16, 2000.)

On February 20, 2002, the GSA re-published its recipient guidance for additional public comment. (See 67 FR 7692.) Comments representing 24 different organizations were received, and the following guidance was developed after review and consideration of those comments. Prior comments on the original guidance need not be re-submitted.

On March 14, 2002, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a Report to Congress titled "Assessment of the Total Benefits and Costs of Implementing Executive Order No. 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The Report made several recommendations designed to minimize confusion and ensure that funds dedicated to LEP services best advance meaningful access for LEP individuals.

One significant recommendation was the adoption of uniform guidance across all Federal agencies, with flexibility to permit tailoring to each agency's specific recipients. In a memorandum to all Federal funding agencies dated July 8, 2002, Assistant Attorney General Ralph Boyd of DOJ's Civil Rights Division requested that agencies model their agency-specific guidance for recipients after sections I through VIII of DOJ's June 18, 2002, guidance. Therefore, this guidance is modeled after the language and format of DOJ's revised, final guidance, "Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination

Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons", published on June 18, 2002, 67 FR 41455.

It has been determined that the guidance does not constitute a regulation subject to the rulemaking requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 553.

The text of the complete guidance document appears as an attachment to this notice.

Dated: July 1, 2003.

Madeline Caliendo,

Associate Administrator, Office of Civil Rights.

I. Introduction

Most individuals living in the United States read, write, speak and understand English. There are many individuals, however, for whom English is not their primary language. For instance, based on the 2000 census, over 26 million individuals speak Spanish and almost 7 million individuals speak an Asian or Pacific Island language at home. If these individuals have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English, they are limited English proficient, or "LEP." While detailed data from the 2000 census has not yet been released, 26% of all Spanish-speakers, 29.9% of all Chinese-speakers, and 28.2% of all Vietnamese-speakers reported that they spoke English "not well" or "not at all" in response to the 1990 census.

Language for LEP individuals can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with applicable responsibilities, or understanding other information provided by federally funded programs and activities. The Federal Government funds an array of services that can be made accessible to otherwise eligible LEP persons. The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these programs and activities to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English. Recipients should not overlook the long-term positive impacts of incorporating or offering English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in parallel with language assistance services. ESL courses can serve as an important adjunct to a proper LEP plan. However, the fact that ESL classes are made available does not obviate the statutory and regulatory requirement to provide meaningful access for those who are not yet English proficient. Recipients of Federal financial assistance have an obligation to reduce

language barriers that can preclude meaningful access by LEP persons to important government services.¹

In certain circumstances, failure to ensure that LEP persons can effectively participate in or benefit from Federally assisted programs and activities may violate the prohibition under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d and Title VI regulations against national origin discrimination. The purpose of this policy guidance is to assist recipients in fulfilling their responsibilities to provide meaningful access to LEP persons under existing law. This policy guidance clarifies existing legal requirements for LEP persons by providing a description of the factors recipients should consider in fulfilling their responsibilities to LEP persons.² These are the same criteria GSA will use in evaluating whether recipients are in compliance with Title VI and Title VI regulations.

In a memorandum to all Federal funding agencies, dated July 8, 2002, Assistant Attorney General Ralph Boyd of the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division requested that agencies model their agency-specific guidance for recipients after Sections I–VIII of DOJ's June 18, 2002 guidance. Therefore, this guidance is modeled after the language and format of the DOJ's revised, final guidance, "Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons", published June 18, 2002, 67 FR 41455. The DOJ's role under Executive Order 13166 is unique. The Order charges DOJ with responsibility for providing LEP Guidance to other Federal agencies and for ensuring consistency among each agency-specific guidance. Consistency among Federal agencies is particularly important. Inconsistency or contradictory guidance could confuse

¹ GSA recognizes that many recipients had language assistance programs in place prior to the issuance of Executive Order 13166. This policy guidance provides a uniform framework for a recipient to integrate, formalize, and assess the continued vitality of these existing and possibly additional reasonable efforts based on the nature of its program or activity, the current needs of the LEP populations it encounters, and its prior experience in providing language services in the community it serves.

² The policy guidance is not a regulation but rather a guide. Title VI and its implementing regulations require that recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons. This guidance provides an analytical framework that recipients may use to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are limited English proficient.

recipients of Federal funds and needlessly increase costs without rendering the meaningful access for LEP persons that this Guidance is designed to address. As with most government initiatives, this requires balancing several principles. While this Guidance discusses that balance in some detail, it is important to note the basic principles behind that balance. First, we must ensure that Federally-assisted programs aimed at the American public do not leave some behind simply because they face challenges communicating in English. This is of particular importance because, in many cases, LEP individuals form a substantial portion of those encountered in Federally-assisted programs. Second, we must achieve this goal while finding constructive methods to reduce the costs of LEP requirements on small businesses, small local governments, or small non-profits that receive Federal financial assistance.

There are many productive steps that the Federal government, either collectively or as individual grant agencies, can take to help recipients reduce the costs of language services without sacrificing meaningful access for LEP persons. Without these steps, certain smaller grantees may well choose not to participate in Federally assisted programs, threatening the critical functions that the programs strive to provide. To that end, GSA plans to continue to provide assistance and guidance in this important area. An interagency working group on LEP has developed a Web site, <http://www.lep.gov>, to assist in disseminating this information to recipients, Federal agencies, and the communities being served.

Many commentators have noted that some have interpreted the case of *Alexander v. Sandoval*, 532 U.S. 275 (2001), as impliedly striking down the regulations promulgated under Title VI that form the basis for the part of Executive Order 13166 that applies to Federally assisted programs and activities. We have taken the position that this is not the case, and will continue to do so. Accordingly, we will strive to ensure that Federally assisted programs and activities work in a way that is effective for all eligible beneficiaries, including those with limited English proficiency.

II. Legal Authority

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, provides that no person shall “on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or

activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Section 602 authorizes and directs Federal agencies that are empowered to extend Federal financial assistance to any program or activity “to effectuate the provisions of [section 601] * * * by issuing rules, regulations, or orders of general applicability.” 42 U.S.C. 2000d-1. GSA regulations promulgated pursuant to section 602 forbid recipients from “utiliz[ing] criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin, or have the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of the program as respects individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin.” 41 CFR 101.6.204-2(a)(2). The Supreme Court, in *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974), interpreted regulations promulgated by the former Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to hold that Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination. In “*Lau*,” a San Francisco school district that had a significant number of non-English speaking students of Chinese origin was required to take reasonable steps to provide them with a meaningful opportunity to participate in Federally funded educational programs.

On August 11, 2000, Executive Order 13166 was issued. “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” 65 FR 50121 (August 16, 2000). Under that order, every Federal agency that provides financial assistance to non-Federal entities must publish guidance on how their recipients can provide meaningful access to LEP persons and thus comply with Title VI regulations forbidding funding recipients from “restrict[ing] an individual in any way in the enjoyment of any advantage or privilege enjoyed by others receiving any service, financial aid, or other benefit under the program” or from “utiliz[ing] criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin, or have the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of the program as respects individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin.”

On that same day, DOJ issued a general guidance document addressed to “Executive Agency Civil Rights Officers” setting forth general principles for agencies to apply in developing guidance documents for recipients pursuant to the Executive Order.

“Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency,” 65 FR 50123 (August 16, 2000) (“DOJ LEP Guidance”).

Subsequently, Federal agencies raised questions regarding the requirements of the Executive Order, especially in light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Alexander v. Sandoval*, 532 U.S. 275 (2001). On October 26, 2001, Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, issued a memorandum for “Heads of Departments and Agencies, General Counsels and Civil Rights Directors.” This memorandum clarified and reaffirmed the DOJ LEP Guidance in light of *Sandoval*.³ The Assistant Attorney General stated that because *Sandoval* did not invalidate any Title VI regulations that proscribe conduct that has a disparate impact on covered groups—the types of regulations that form the legal basis for the part of Executive Order 13166 that applies to Federally assisted programs and activities—the Executive Order remains in force.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13166, GSA developed its own guidance document for recipients and initially issued it on January 17, 2001, “Limited English Proficiency Policy Guidance for recipients of Federal Financial Assistance,” 66 FR 4026 (January 17, 2001) (“LEP Guidance for GSA Recipients”). Because GSA did not receive any public comment on its January 17, 2001 publication, the Agency republished on February 20, 2002 its existing guidance document for additional public comment, “Limited English Proficiency Policy Guidance for Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance,” 67 FR 7692 (February 20, 2002). GSA has since received

³ The memorandum noted that some commentators have interpreted *Sandoval* as impliedly striking down the disparate-impact regulations promulgated under Title VI that form the basis for the part of Executive Order 13166 that applies to Federally assisted programs and activities. *See, e.g., Sandoval* 532 U.S. at 286, 286 n.6 (“[W]e assume for purposes of this decision that section 602 confers the authority to promulgate disparate-impact regulation; * * * We cannot help observing, however, how strange it is to say that disparate-impact regulations are ‘inspired by, at the service of, and inseparably intertwined with’ Sec. 601 * * * when Sec. 601 permits the very behavior that the regulations forbid.”). The memorandum, however, made clear that DOJ disagreed with the commentators’ interpretation. *Sandoval* holds principally that there is no private right of action to enforce Title VI disparate-impact regulations. It did not address the validity of those regulations or Executive Order 13166 or otherwise limit the authority and responsibility of Federal grant agencies to enforce their own implementing regulations.

significant public comment. This guidance document is thus published pursuant to Executive Order 13166. Once final it will supplant the January 17, 2001 publication in light of the public comment received and Assistant Attorney General Boyd's October 26, 2001 clarifying memorandum and July 8, 2002 memorandum advising agencies to revise and re-publish their guidance, modeled after DOJ's June 18, 2002 final guidance.

III. Who Is Covered?

GSA's implementation regulations provide, in part, at 41 CFR 101-6.204-1:

"No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program to which this subpart applies."

Specific discriminatory actions prohibited are addressed at 41 CFR 101-6.204-2: "(a)(1) In connection with any program to which this subpart applies, a recipient may not, directly or through contractual or other arrangements, on the ground of race, color, or national origin:

- (i) Deny an individual any services/benefits, financial aid, or other benefit provided under the program;
- (ii) Provide any service, financial aid, or other benefit to any individual which is different, or is provided in a different manner, from that provided to others under the program;
- (iii) Subject an individual to segregation or separate treatment in any matter related to his receipt of any service, financial aid, or other benefit under the program;
- (iv) Restrict an individual in any way in the enjoyment of any advantage or privilege enjoyed by others receiving any service, financial aid, or other benefit under the program;
- (v) Treat an individual differently from others in determining whether he satisfies any admission, enrollment, quota, eligibility, membership or other requirement or condition which individuals must meet in order to be provided any service, financial aid, or other benefit provided under the program;
- (vi) Deny an individual an opportunity to participate in the program through the provision of services or otherwise, or afford him an opportunity to do so which is different from that afforded others under the program * * *."

Federal financial assistance includes grants, training, use of equipment, donations of surplus property, and other

assistance. Recipients of GSA assistance include, for example:⁴

- State and local agencies involved in such activities as: Conservation; economic development; education; park and recreation programs; public safety; public health programs for the elderly; and programs for the homeless; and
- Nonprofit organizations that perform educational and public health activities exempt from taxation under section 501 of the Internal Revenue such as: Medical institutions; hospitals; clinics; health centers; and drug abuse treatment centers; schools; universities; Head Start; childcare centers; educational radio and television stations; museums attended by the public; libraries; food banks; and other eligible organizations that provide support and services to the needy, shelter, or support services to the homeless or impoverished.

Subrecipients likewise are covered when Federal funds are passed through from one recipient to a subrecipient. Coverage extends to a recipient's entire program or activity, *i.e.*, to all parts of a recipient's operations. This is true even if only one part of the recipient receives the Federal assistance.⁵

Example: GSA donates a surplus backhoe and grader to a State park within the State Department of Parks and Recreation. All of the operations of the entire State Department of Parks and Recreation—not just the particular park that received the property—are covered.

Finally, some recipients operate in jurisdictions in which English has been declared the official language. Nonetheless, these recipients continue to be subject to Federal non-discrimination requirements, including those applicable to the provision of Federally assisted services to persons with limited English proficiency.

IV. Who Is a Limited English Proficient Individual?

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or "LEP," entitled to language assistance with respect to a

⁴ Pursuant to Executive Order 13166, the meaningful access requirement of the Title VI regulations and the four-factor analysis set forth in the GSA LEP Guidance are to additionally apply to the programs and activities of Federal agencies, including the GSA.

⁵ However, if a Federal agency were to decide to terminate Federal funds based on noncompliance with Title VI or its regulations, only funds directed to the particular program or activity that is out of compliance would be terminated. 42 U.S.C. 2000d-1.

particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

Examples of populations likely to include LEP persons who are encountered and/or served by GSA recipients and should be considered when planning language services include, but are not limited to:

- Persons seeking assistance from a county's emergency services, such as 9-1-1 service, which include individuals reporting automobile accidents, fires, criminal, or other activity; and individuals who encounter the legal system;
- Parents or other family members seeking information about childcare and educational services; and
- Individuals seeking services from homeless shelters, domestic abuse shelters, food banks, clinics, hospitals, medical institutions, or health-care providers.

V. How Does a Recipient Determine the Extent of Its Obligation To Provide LEP Services?

Recipients are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. While designed to be a flexible and fact-dependent standard, the starting point is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors: (1) The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee; (2) the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program; (3) the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to people's lives; and (4) the resources available to the grantee/recipient and costs. As indicated above, the intent of this guidance is to suggest a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small business, small local governments, or small nonprofits.

After applying the above four-factor analysis, a recipient may conclude that different language assistance measures are sufficient for the different types of programs or activities in which it engages. For instance, some of a recipient's activities will be more important than others and/or have greater impact on or contact with LEP persons, and thus may require more in the way of language assistance. The flexibility that recipients have in addressing the needs of the LEP populations they serve does not diminish, and should not be used to minimize, the obligation that those needs be addressed. GSA recipients should apply the following four factors

to the various kinds of contacts that they have with the public to assess language needs and decide what reasonable steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons.

(1) The Number or Proportion of LEP Persons Served or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population

One factor in determining what language services recipients should provide is the number or proportion of LEP persons from a particular language group served or encountered in the eligible service population. The greater the number or proportion of these LEP persons, the more likely language services are needed. Ordinarily, persons "eligible to be served, or likely to be directly affected by," a recipient's program or activity are those who are served or encountered in the eligible service population. This population will be program-specific, and includes persons who are in the geographic area that has been approved by a Federal grant agency as the recipient's service area. However, where, for instance, a nonprofit organization operates several shelters within a large county and one health clinic that serves a large LEP population in a rural part of the country, the appropriate service area for the clinic is most likely that portion of the county served by the health clinic, and not the entire population served by the nonprofit organization. The same would be true for the shelters. Where no service area has previously been approved, the relevant service area may be that which is approved by state or local authorities or designated by the recipient itself, provided that these designations do not themselves discriminatorily exclude certain populations. When considering the number or proportion of LEP individuals in a service area, recipients should consider LEP parent(s) when their English-proficient or LEP minor children and dependents encounter the recipient's services, programs or activities.

Recipients should first examine their prior experiences with LEP encounters and determine the breadth and scope of language services that were needed. In conducting this analysis, it is important to include language minority populations that are eligible for their programs or activities but may be underserved because of existing language barriers. Other data should be consulted to refine or validate a recipient's prior experience, including the latest census data for the area served, data from school systems and from community organizations, and data

from state and local governments.⁶ Community agencies, school systems, religious organizations, legal aid entities, and others can often assist in identifying populations for whom outreach is needed and who would benefit from the recipients' programs and activities were language services provided.

(2) The Frequency With Which LEP Individuals Come in Contact With the Program

Recipients should assess, as accurately as possible, the frequency with which they have or should have contact with an LEP individual from different language groups seeking assistance. The more frequent the contact with a particular language group, the more likely that enhanced language services in that language are needed. The steps that are reasonable for a recipient that serves an LEP person on a one-time basis will be very different than those expected from a recipient that serves LEP persons daily. It is also advisable to consider the frequency of different types of language contacts. For example, frequent contacts with Spanish-speaking people who are LEP may require certain assistance in Spanish. Less frequent contact with different language groups may suggest a different and less intensified solution. If an LEP individual accesses a program or service on a daily basis, a recipient has greater duties than if the same individual's program or activity contact is unpredictable or infrequent. But even recipients that serve LEP persons on an unpredictable or infrequent basis should use this balancing analysis to determine what to do if an LEP individual seeks services under the program in question. This plan need not be intricate. It may be as simple as being prepared to use one of the commercially-available telephonic interpretation services to obtain immediate interpreter services. In applying this standard, recipients should take care to consider whether appropriate outreach to LEP persons could increase the frequency of contact with LEP language groups.

⁶ The focus of the analysis is on lack of English proficiency, not the ability to speak more than one language. Note that demographic data may indicate the most frequently spoken languages other than English and the percentage of people who speak that language who speak or understand English less than well. Some of the most commonly spoken languages other than English may be spoken by people who are also overwhelmingly proficient in English. Thus, they may not be the languages spoken most frequently by limited English proficient individuals. When using demographic data, it is important to focus in on the languages spoken by those who are not proficient in English.

(3) The Nature and Importance of the Program, Activity, or Service Provided by the Program

The more important the activity, information, service, or program, or the greater the possible consequences of the contact to the LEP individuals, the more likely language services are needed. The obligations to communicate with a person in need of emergency health, fire or law enforcement services may differ, for example, from those to provide information about museum hours, location, exhibits and services. A recipient needs to determine whether denial or delay of access to services or information could have serious or even life-threatening implications for the LEP individual. Decisions by a Federal, State, or local entity to make an activity compulsory, such as educational programs, the provision of a hearing or complaint process, or the communication of Miranda rights, or other rights or warning information, can serve as strong evidence of the program's importance.

(4) The Resources Available to the Recipient and Costs

A recipient's level of resources and the costs that would be imposed on it may have an impact on the nature of the steps it should take. Smaller recipients with more limited budgets are not expected to provide the same level of language services as larger recipients with larger budgets. In addition, "reasonable steps" may cease to be reasonable where the costs imposed substantially exceed the benefits.

Resource and cost issues, however, can often be reduced by technological advances; the sharing of language assistance materials and services among and between recipients, advocacy groups, and Federal grant agencies; and reasonable business practices. Where appropriate, training bilingual staff to act as interpreters and translators, information sharing through industry groups, telephonic and video conferencing interpretation services, pooling resources and standardizing documents to reduce translation needs, using qualified translators and interpreters to ensure that documents need not be "fixed" later and that inaccurate interpretations do not cause delay or other costs, centralizing interpreter and translator services to achieve economies of scale, or the formalized use of qualified community volunteers, for example, may help reduce costs.⁷ Recipients should

⁷ Small recipients with limited resources may find that entering into a bulk telephonic

carefully explore the most cost-effective means of delivering competent and accurate language services before limiting services due to resource concerns. Large entities and those entities serving a significant number or proportion of LEP persons should ensure that their resource limitations are well-substantiated before using this factor as a reason to limit language assistance. Such recipients may find it useful to be able to articulate, through documentation or in some other reasonable manner, their process for determining that language services would be limited based on resources or costs.

This four-factor analysis necessarily implicates the "mix" of LEP services required. Recipients have two main ways to provide language services: Oral interpretation either in person or via telephone interpretation service (hereinafter "interpretation") and written translation (hereinafter "translation"). Oral interpretation can range from on-site interpreters for critical services provided to a high volume of LEP persons to access through commercially-available telephonic interpretation services. Written translation, likewise, can range from translation of an entire document to translation of a short description of the document. In some cases, language services should be made available on an expedited basis while in others the LEP individual may be referred to another office of the recipient for language assistance.

The correct mix should be based on what is both necessary and reasonable in light of the four-factor analysis. For instance, a medical clinic in a largely Hispanic neighborhood may need immediate oral interpreters available and should give serious consideration to hiring some bilingual staff. In contrast, there may be circumstances where the importance and nature of the activity and number or proportion and frequency of contact with LEP persons may be low and the costs and resources needed to provide language services may be high, such as in the case of a voluntary tour of a city park and recreation area, in which pre-arranged language services for the particular service may not be necessary. Regardless of the type of language service provided, quality and accuracy of those services can be critical in order to avoid serious consequences to the LEP person and to the recipient. Recipients have substantial flexibility in determining the appropriate mix.

interpretation service contract will prove cost effective.

VI. Selecting Language Assistance Services

Recipients have two main ways to provide language services: Oral and written language services. Quality and accuracy of the language service is critical in order to avoid serious consequences to the LEP person and to the recipient.

A. Oral Language Services (Interpretation)

Interpretation is the act of listening to something in one language (source language) and orally translating it into another language (target language). Where interpretation is needed and is reasonable, recipients should consider some or all of the following options for providing competent interpreters in a timely manner:

Competence of Interpreters. When providing oral assistance, recipients should ensure competency of the language service provider, no matter which of the strategies outlined below are used. Competency requires more than self-identification as bilingual. Some bilingual staff and community volunteers, for instance, may be able to communicate effectively in a different language when communicating information directly in that language, but not be competent to interpret in and out of English. Likewise, they may not be able to do written translations.

Competency to interpret, however, does not necessarily mean formal certification as an interpreter, although certification is helpful. When using interpreters, recipients should ensure that they:

Demonstrate proficiency in and ability to communicate information accurately in both English and in the other language and identify and employ the appropriate mode of interpreting (*e.g.* consecutive, simultaneous, summarization, or sight translation);

Have knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts peculiar to the entity's program or activity and of any particularized vocabulary and phraseology used by the LEP person;⁸ and understand and

⁸ Many languages have "regionalisms," or differences in usage. For instance, a word that may be understood to mean something in Spanish for someone from Cuba may not be so understood by someone from Mexico. In addition, because there may be languages, which do not have an appropriate direct interpretation of, some technical terms and the interpreter should be so aware and be able to provide the most appropriate interpretation. The interpreter should likely make the recipient aware of the issue and the interpreter and recipient can then work to develop a consistent and appropriate set of descriptions of these terms in that language that can be used again, when appropriate.

follow confidentiality and impartiality rules to the same extent the recipient employee for whom they are interpreting and/or to the extent their position requires.

Understand and adhere to their role as interpreters without deviating into a role as counselor, legal/medical advisor, or other roles (particularly in court, administrative hearings, law enforcement or medical services contexts).

Some recipients, such as courts, may have additional self-imposed requirements for interpreters. Where individual rights depend on precise, complete, and accurate interpretation or translations, particularly in the contexts of courtrooms and custodial or other police interrogations, the use of certified interpreters is strongly encouraged.⁹ Where such proceedings are lengthy, the interpreter will likely need breaks and team interpreting may be appropriate to ensure accuracy and to prevent errors caused by mental fatigue of interpreters.

While quality and accuracy of language services is critical, the quality and accuracy of language services is nonetheless part of the appropriate mix of LEP services required. The quality and accuracy of language services in a hospital emergency room, for example, must be extraordinarily high, while the quality and accuracy of language services in a bicycle safety class need not meet the same exacting standards.

Finally, when interpretation is needed and is reasonable, it should be provided in a timely manner. To be meaningfully effective, language assistance should be timely. While there is no single definition for "timely" applicable to all types of interactions at all times by all types of recipients, one clear guide is that the language assistance should be provided at a time and place that avoids the effective denial of the service, benefit, or right at issue or the imposition of an undue burden on or delay in important rights, benefits, or services to the LEP person. For example, when the timeliness of services is important, such as with certain activities of GSA recipients providing law enforcement, health, and safety services, and when important legal rights or the LEP individual's health or safety is at issue, a recipient would likely not be providing meaningful access if it had one bilingual staffer available one day a week to provide the service. Such conduct would likely result in delays for LEP persons that

⁹ For those languages in which no formal accreditation or certification currently exists, recipients should consider a formal process for establishing the credentials of the interpreter.

would be significantly greater than those for English proficient persons. Conversely, where access to or exercise of a service, benefit, or right is not effectively precluded by a reasonable delay, language assistance can likely be delayed for a reasonable period.

Hiring Bilingual Staff. When particular languages are encountered often, hiring bilingual staff offers one of the best, and often most economical, options. Recipients can, for example, fill public contact positions, such as 911 operators, police officers, guards, medical/emergency personnel, or program directors, with staff who are bilingual and competent to communicate directly with LEP persons in their language. If bilingual staff is also used to interpret between English speakers and LEP persons, or to orally interpret written documents from English into another language, they should be competent in the skill of interpreting. Being bilingual does not necessarily mean that a person has the ability to interpret. In addition, there may be instances when the role of the employee may conflict with the role of an interpreter (for instance, a staff witness in a school disciplinary hearing may not be appropriate to serve as an interpreter at the same time, even if he or she were skilled at interpreting). Effective management strategies, including any appropriate adjustments in assignments and protocols for using bilingual staff, can ensure that bilingual staff is fully and appropriately utilized. When bilingual staff cannot meet all of the language service obligations of the recipient, the recipient should turn to other options.

Hiring Staff Interpreters. Hiring interpreters may be most helpful where there is a frequent need for interpreting services in one or more languages. Depending on the facts, sometimes it may be necessary and reasonable to provide on-site interpreters to provide accurate and meaningful communication with an LEP person.

Contracting for Interpreters. Contract interpreters may be a cost-effective option when there is no regular need for a particular language skill. In addition to commercial and other private providers, many community-based organizations and mutual assistance associations provide interpretation services for particular languages. Contracting with and providing training regarding the recipient's programs and processes to these organizations can be a cost-effective option for providing language services to LEP persons from those language groups.

Using Telephone Interpreter Lines. Telephone interpreter service lines often

offer speedy interpreting assistance in many different languages. They may be particularly appropriate where the mode of communicating with an English proficient person would also be over the phone. Although telephonic interpretation services are useful in many situations, it is important to ensure that, when using such services, the interpreters used are competent to interpret any technical or legal terms specific to a particular program that may be important parts of the conversation. Nuances in language and non-verbal communication can often assist an interpreter and cannot be recognized over the phone. Video conferencing may sometimes help to resolve this issue where necessary. In addition, where documents are being discussed, it is important to give telephonic interpreters adequate opportunity to review the document prior to the discussion and any logistical problems should be addressed.

Using Community Volunteers. In addition to consideration of bilingual staff, staff interpreters, or contract interpreters (either in-person or by telephone) as options to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons, use of recipient-coordinated community volunteers, working with, for instance, community-based organizations may provide a cost-effective supplemental language assistance strategy under appropriate circumstances. They may be particularly useful in providing language access for a recipient's less critical programs and activities. To the extent the recipient relies on community volunteers, it is often best to use volunteers who are trained in the information or services of the program and can communicate directly with LEP persons in their language. Just as with all interpreters, community volunteers used to interpret between English speakers and LEP persons, or to orally translate documents, should be competent in the skill of interpreting and knowledgeable about applicable confidentiality and impartiality rules. Recipients should consider formal arrangements with community-based organizations that provide volunteers to address these concerns and to help ensure that services are available more regularly.

Use of Family Members, or Friends or Other Volunteers as Interpreters. Although recipients should not plan to rely on an LEP person's family members, friends, or other informal interpreters to provide meaningful access to important programs and activities, where LEP persons so desire, they should be permitted to use, at their own expense, an interpreter of their

own choosing (whether a professional interpreter, family member, friend, other volunteer) in place of or as a supplement to the free language services expressly offered by the recipient. LEP persons may feel more comfortable when a trusted family member, friend, or other individual acts as an interpreter. In addition, in exigent circumstances that are not reasonably foreseeable, temporary use of interpreters not provided by the recipient may be necessary. However, with proper planning and implementation, recipients should be able to avoid most such situations.

Recipients, however, should take special care to ensure that family, legal guardians, caretakers, and other informal interpreters are appropriate in light of the circumstances and subject matter of the program, service or activity, including protection of the recipient's own administrative or enforcement interest in accurate interpretation. In many circumstances, family members (especially children), friends, other individuals are not competent to provide quality and accurate interpretations. Issues of confidentiality, privacy, or conflict of interest may also arise. LEP individuals may feel uncomfortable revealing or describing sensitive, confidential, or potentially embarrassing or sensitive information, such as medical history/condition, previous sexual or violent assault history, family history, or financial information to a family member, friend, or member of the local community.¹⁰

In addition, such informal interpreters may have a personal connection to the LEP person or an undisclosed conflict of interest, such as the desire to protect themselves or another individual. For these reasons, when oral language services are necessary, recipients should generally offer competent interpreter services free of cost to the LEP person. For GSA recipient programs and activities, this is particularly true in situations in which health, safety, or access to important benefits and services are at stake, or when credibility and accuracy are important to protect an individual's rights and access to important services.

An example of such a case is when police officers respond to a domestic violence call. In such a case, use of family members or neighbors to interpret for the alleged victim, perpetrator, or witnesses may raise

¹⁰ Recipients should take these concerns into consideration when determining whether the LEP individual has made a knowing and voluntary choice for the use of a family, legal guardian, caretaker or other informal interpreter.

serious issues of competency, confidentiality, and conflict of interest and is thus inappropriate. While issues of competency, confidentiality, and conflict of interest in the use of family members (especially children), friends, other inmates or other detainees often make their use inappropriate, the use of these individuals as interpreters may be an appropriate option where proper application of the four factors would lead to a conclusion that recipient-provided services are not necessary. An example of this is a voluntary educational tour of a public building. There, the importance and nature of the activity may be relatively low and unlikely to implicate issues of confidentiality, conflict of interest, or the need for accuracy. In addition, the resources needed and costs of providing language services may be high. In such a setting, an LEP person's use of family, friends, or others may be appropriate.

If the LEP person voluntarily chooses to provide his or her own interpreter, a recipient should consider whether a record of that choice and of the recipient's offer of assistance is appropriate. Where precise, complete, and accurate interpretations or translations of information and/or testimony are critical for medical, safety, law enforcement, adjudicatory, or legal reasons, or where the competency of the LEP person's interpreter is not established, a recipient might decide to provide its own, independent interpreter, even if an LEP person wants to use his or her own interpreter as well. Extra caution should be exercised when the LEP person chooses to use a minor as the interpreter. While the LEP person's decision should be respected, there may be additional issues of competency, confidentiality, or conflict of interest when the choice involves using children as interpreters. The recipient should take care to ensure that the LEP person's choice is voluntary, that the LEP person is aware of the possible problems if the preferred interpreter is a minor child, and that the LEP person knows that a competent interpreter could be provided by the recipient at no cost.

B. Written Language Services (Translation)

Translation is the replacement of a written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

What Documents Should be Translated? After applying the four-factor analysis, a recipient may determine that an effective LEP plan for its particular program or activity includes the translation of vital written

materials into the language of each frequently-encountered LEP group eligible to be served and/or likely to be affected by the recipient's program.

Such written materials could include, for example:

- Consent and complaint forms;
- Intake forms with the potential for important consequences;
- Written notices of rights and responsibilities, denial, loss, or decreases in benefits or services, parole, and other hearings;
- Notices of disciplinary action;
- Notices advising LEP persons of free language assistance;
- Written tests that do not assess English language competency, but test competency for a particular license, job, or skill for which Knowing English is not required; and
- Applications to participate in a recipient's program or activity or to receive recipient benefits or services.

Whether or not a document (or the information it solicits) is "vital" may depend upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the LEP person if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner. For instance, applications for a fishing class taught at the county lake should not generally be considered vital, whereas applications for drug and alcohol counseling/treatment in a homeless shelter or in prison could be considered vital. Where appropriate, recipients are encouraged to create a plan for consistently determining, over time and across its various activities, what documents are "vital" to the meaningful access of the LEP populations they serve.

Classifying a document as vital or non-vital is sometimes difficult, especially in the case of outreach materials like brochures or other information on rights and services. Awareness of rights or services is an important part of "meaningful access." Lack of awareness that a particular program, right, or service exists may effectively deny LEP individuals meaningful access. Thus, where a recipient is engaged in community outreach activities in furtherance of its activities, it should regularly assess the needs of the populations frequently encountered or affected by the program or activity to determine whether certain critical outreach materials should be translated. Community organizations may be helpful in determining what outreach materials may be most helpful to translate. In addition, the recipient should consider whether translations of outreach material may be made more

effective when done in tandem with other outreach methods, including utilizing the ethnic media, schools, religious, and community organizations to spread a message.

Sometimes a document includes both vital and non-vital information. This may be the case when the document is very large. It may also be the case when the title and a phone number for obtaining more information on the contents of the document in frequently-encountered languages other than English is critical, but the document is sent out to the general public and cannot reasonably be translated into many languages. Thus, vital information may include, for instance, the provision of information in appropriate languages other than English regarding where a LEP person might obtain an interpretation or translation of the document.

Into What Languages Should Documents be Translated? The languages spoken by the LEP individuals with whom the recipient has contact determine the languages into which vital documents should be translated. A distinction should be made, however, between languages that are frequently encountered by a recipient and less commonly-encountered languages. Many recipients serve communities in large cities or across the country. They regularly serve LEP persons who speak dozens and sometimes over 100 different languages. To translate all written materials into all of those languages is unrealistic. Although recent technological advances have made it easier for recipients to store and share translated documents, such an undertaking would incur substantial costs and require substantial resources. Nevertheless, well-substantiated claims of lack of resources to translate all vital documents into dozens of languages do not necessarily relieve the recipient of the obligation to translate those documents into at least several of the more frequently-encountered languages and to set benchmarks for continued translations into the remaining languages over time. As a result, the extent of the recipient's obligation to provide written translations of documents should be determined by the recipient on a case-by-case basis, looking at the totality of the circumstances in light of the four-factor analysis. Because translation is a one-time expense, consideration should be given to whether the upfront cost of translating a document (as opposed to oral interpretation) should be amortized over the likely lifespan of the document when applying this four-factor analysis.

Safe Harbor. Many recipients would like to ensure with greater certainty that they comply with their obligations to provide written translations in languages other than English.

Paragraphs (a) and (b) outline the circumstances that can provide a "safe harbor" for recipients regarding the requirements for translation of written materials. A "safe harbor" means that if a recipient provides written translations under these circumstances, such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations.

The failure to provide written translations under the circumstances outlined in paragraphs (a) and (b) does not mean there is non-compliance. Rather, they provide a common starting point for recipients to consider whether and at what point the importance of the service, benefit, or activity involved; the nature of the information sought; and the number or proportion of LEP persons served call for written translations of commonly-used forms into frequently-encountered languages other than English. Thus, these paragraphs merely provide a guide for recipients that would like greater certainty of compliance than can be provided by a fact-intensive, four-factor analysis.

Example: Even if the safe harbors are not used, if written translation of a certain document(s) would be so burdensome as to defeat the legitimate objectives of its program, the translation of the written materials is not necessary. Other ways of providing meaningful access, such as effective oral interpretation of certain vital documents, might be acceptable under such circumstances.

Safe Harbor. The following actions will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written-translation obligations:

The GSA recipient provides written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. Translation of other documents, if needed, can be provided orally; or

If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group that reaches the five percent trigger in (a), the recipient does not translate vital written materials but provides written notice in the primary language of the LEP language group of the right to receive competent oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost.

These safe harbor provisions apply to the translation of written documents only. They do not affect the requirement

to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals through competent oral interpreters where oral language services are needed and are reasonable. For example, schools should, where appropriate, ensure that school rules have been explained to LEP students, at orientation, for instance, prior to taking disciplinary action against them.

Competence of Translators. As with oral interpreters, translators of written documents should be competent. Many of the same considerations apply. However, the skill of translating is very different from the skill of interpreting, and a person who is a competent interpreter may or may not be competent to translate.

Particularly where legal or other vital documents are being translated, competence can often be achieved by use of certified translators. Certification or accreditation may not always be possible or necessary.¹¹ Competence can often be ensured by having a second, independent translator "check" the work of the primary translator. Alternatively, one translator can translate the document, and a second, independent translator could translate it back into English to check that the appropriate meaning has been conveyed. This is called "back translation."

Translators should understand the expected reading level of the audience and, where appropriate, have fundamental knowledge about the target language group's vocabulary and phraseology. Sometimes direct translation of materials results in a translation that is written at a much more difficult level than the English language version or has no relevant equivalent meaning.¹² Community organizations may be able to help consider whether a document is written at a good level for the audience.

¹¹ For those languages in which no formal accreditation currently exists, a particular level of membership in a professional translation association can provide some indicator of professionalism.

¹² For instance, there may be languages, which do not have an appropriate direct translation of some legal or technical terms, and the translator should be able to provide an appropriate translation. The translator should likely also make the recipient aware of this. Recipients can then work with translators to develop a consistent and appropriate set of descriptions of these terms in that language that can be used again, when appropriate. Recipients will find it more effective and less costly if they try to maintain consistency in the words and phrases used to translate terms of art and legal or other technical concepts. Creating or using already created glossaries of commonly used terms may be useful for LEP persons and translators and cost effective for the recipient. Providing translators with examples of previous translations of similar material by the recipient, other recipients, or federal agencies may be helpful.

Likewise, consistency in the words and phrases used to translate terms of art, legal, or other technical concepts helps avoid confusion by LEP individuals and may reduce costs. Creating or using already-created glossaries of commonly-used terms may be useful for LEP persons and translators and cost effective for the recipient. Providing translators with examples of previous accurate translations of similar material by the recipient, other recipients, or Federal agencies may be helpful.

While quality and accuracy of translation services is critical, the quality and accuracy of translation services is nonetheless part of the appropriate mix of LEP services required. For instance, documents that are simple and have no legal or other consequence for LEP persons who rely on them may use translators that are less skilled than important documents with legal or other information upon which reliance has important consequences (including, e.g., information or documents of GSA recipients regarding certain law enforcement, health and safety service, or certain legal rights). The permanent nature of written translations, however, imposes additional responsibility on the recipient to ensure that the quality and accuracy permit meaningful access by LEP persons.

VII. Elements of Effective Plan on Language Assistance for LEP Persons

After completing the four-factor analysis and deciding what language assistance services are appropriate, a recipient should develop an implementation plan to address the identified needs of the LEP populations they serve. Recipients have considerable flexibility in developing this plan. The development and maintenance of a periodically-updated written plan on language assistance for LEP persons ("LEP plan") for use by recipient employees serving the public will likely be the most appropriate and cost-effective means of documenting compliance and providing a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance. Moreover, such written plans would likely provide additional benefits to a recipient's managers in the areas of training, administration, planning, and budgeting. These benefits should lead most recipients to document in a written LEP plan their language assistance services, and how staff and LEP persons can access those services. Despite these benefits, certain GSA recipients, such as recipients serving very few LEP persons and recipients with very limited resources, may choose

not to develop a written LEP plan. However, the absence of a written LEP plan does not obviate the underlying obligation to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons to a recipient's program or activities. Accordingly, in the event that a recipient elects not to develop a written plan, it should consider alternative ways to articulate in some other reasonable manner a plan for providing meaningful access. Entities having significant contact with LEP persons, such as schools, religious organizations, community groups, and groups working with new immigrants can be very helpful in providing important input into this planning process from the beginning. The following five steps may be helpful in designing an LEP plan and are typically part of effective implementation plans.

(1) *Identifying LEP Individuals Who Need Language Assistance.* The first two factors in the four-factor analysis require an assessment of the number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be served or encountered and the frequency of encounters. This requires recipients to identify LEP persons with whom it has contact.

One way to determine the language of communication is to use language identification cards (or "I speak cards"), which invite LEP persons to identify their language needs to staff. Such cards, for instance, might say, "I speak Spanish" in both Spanish and English, "I speak Vietnamese" in both English and Vietnamese, etc. To reduce costs of compliance, the Federal government has made a set of these cards available on the Internet. The Census Bureau "I speak card" can be found and downloaded at <http://www.lep.gov>. When records are normally kept of past interactions with members of the public, the language of the LEP person can be included as part of the record. In addition to helping employees identify the language of LEP persons they encounter, this process will help in future applications of the first two factors of the four-factor analysis. In addition, posting notices in commonly encountered languages notifying LEP persons of language assistance will encourage them to self-identify.

(2) *Language Assistance Measures.* An effective LEP plan would likely include information about the ways in which language assistance will be provided. For instance, recipients may want to include information on at least the following:

- Types of language services available.
- How staff can obtain those services.
- How to respond to LEP callers.
- How to respond to written communications from LEP persons.

- How to respond to LEP individuals who have in-person contact with recipient staff.

- How to ensure competency of interpreters and translation services.

(3) *Training Staff.* Staff should know their obligations to provide meaningful access to information and services for LEP persons. An effective LEP plan would likely include training to ensure that:

- Staff knows about LEP policies and procedures.

- Staff having contact with the public (or those in a recipient's care) are trained to work effectively with in-person and telephone interpreters.

Recipients may want to include this training as part of the orientation for new employees. It is important to ensure that all employees in public contact positions (or having contact with those in a recipient's care) are properly trained. Recipients have flexibility in deciding the manner in which the training is provided. The more frequent the contact with LEP persons, the greater the need will be for in-depth training. Staff with little or no contact with LEP persons may only have to be aware of an LEP plan. However, management staff, even if they do not interact regularly with LEP persons, should be fully aware of and understand the plan so they can reinforce its importance and ensure its implementation by staff.

(4) *Providing Notice to LEP Persons.* Once an agency has decided, based on the four factors, that it will provide language services, it is important for the recipient to let LEP persons know that those services are available and that they are free of charge. Recipients should provide this notice in a language LEP persons will understand. Examples of notification that recipients should consider include:

- (a) Posting signs in intake areas and other entry points. When language assistance is needed to ensure meaningful access to information and services, it is important to provide notice in appropriate languages in intake areas or initial points of contact so that LEP persons can learn how to access those language services. This is particularly true in areas with high volumes of LEP persons seeking access to certain health, safety, or law enforcement services or activities run by GSA recipients. For instance, signs in intake offices could state that free language assistance is available. The signs should be translated into the most common languages encountered. They

should explain how to get the language help.¹³

(b) Stating in outreach documents that language services are available from the agency. Announcements could be in, for instance, brochures, booklets, and in outreach and recruitment information. These statements should be translated into the most common languages and could be "tagged" onto the front of common documents.

(c) Working with community-based organizations and other stakeholders to inform LEP individuals of the recipients' services, including the availability of language assistance services.

(d) Using a telephone voice mail menu. The menu could be in the most common languages encountered. It should provide information about available language assistance services and how to get them.

(e) Including notices in local newspapers in languages other than English.

(f) Providing notices on non-English-language radio and television stations about the available language assistance services and how to get them.

(g) Presentations and/or notices at schools and religious organizations.

(5) *Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan.* Recipients should, where appropriate, have a process for determining, on an ongoing basis, whether new documents, programs, services, and activities need to be made accessible for LEP individuals, and they may want to provide notice of any changes in services to the LEP public and to employees. In addition, recipients should consider whether changes in demographics, types of services, or other needs require annual reevaluation of their LEP plan. Less frequent reevaluation may be more appropriate where demographics, services, and needs are more static. One good way to evaluate the LEP plan is to seek feedback from the community.

In their reviews, recipients may want to consider assessing changes in:

- Current LEP populations in service area or population affected or encountered.
- Frequency of encounters with LEP language groups.
- Nature and importance of activities to LEP persons.
- Availability of resources, including technological advances and sources of additional resources, and the costs imposed.

¹³ The Social Security Administration has made such signs available at <http://www.ssa.gov/multilanguage/lanlist.htm>. These signs could, for example, be modified for recipient use.

- Whether existing assistance is meeting the needs of LEP persons.
- Whether staff knows and understands the LEP plan and how to implement it.
- Whether identified sources for assistance are still available and viable.

In addition to these five elements, effective plans set clear goals, management accountability, and opportunities for community input and planning throughout the process.

VIII. Voluntary Compliance Effort

The goal for Title VI and Title VI regulatory enforcement is to achieve voluntary compliance. The requirement to provide meaningful access to LEP persons is enforced and implemented by GSA through the procedures identified in the Title VI regulations. These procedures include complaint investigations, compliance reviews, efforts to secure voluntary compliance, and technical assistance.

The Title VI regulations provide that GSA will investigate whenever it receives a complaint, report, or other information that alleges or indicates possible noncompliance with Title VI or its regulations. If the investigation results in a finding of compliance, GSA will inform the recipient in writing of this determination, including the basis for the determination. GSA is committed to using voluntary compliance (informal resolution) to resolve findings of noncompliance. However, if a case is fully investigated and results in a finding of noncompliance, GSA must inform the recipient of the noncompliance through a Letter of Findings that sets out the areas of noncompliance and the steps that must be taken to correct the noncompliance. It must attempt to secure voluntary compliance through informal means. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, GSA must secure compliance through the termination of Federal assistance after the GSA recipient has been given an opportunity for an administrative hearing and/or by referring the matter to the DOJ to seek injunctive relief or pursue other enforcement proceedings. GSA engages in voluntary compliance efforts and provides technical assistance to recipients at all stages of an investigation. During these efforts, GSA proposes reasonable timetables for achieving compliance and consults with and assists recipients in exploring cost-effective ways of coming into compliance. In determining a recipient's compliance with the Title VI regulations, GSA's primary concern is to ensure that the recipient's policies and

procedures provide meaningful access for LEP persons to the recipient's programs and activities.

While all recipients must work toward building systems that will ensure access for LEP individuals, GSA acknowledges that the implementation of a comprehensive system to serve LEP individuals is a process and that a system will evolve over time as it is implemented and periodically reevaluated. As recipients take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to Federally assisted programs and activities for LEP persons, GSA will look favorably on intermediate steps recipients take that are consistent with this Guidance, and that, as part of a broader implementation plan or schedule, move their service delivery system toward providing full access to LEP persons. This does not excuse noncompliance but instead recognizes that full compliance in all areas of a recipient's activities and for all potential language minority groups may reasonably require a series of implementing actions over a period of time. However, in developing any phased implementation schedule, GSA recipients should ensure that the provision of appropriate assistance for significant LEP populations or with respect to activities having a significant impact on the health, safety, legal rights, or livelihood of beneficiaries is addressed first. Recipients are encouraged to document their efforts to provide LEP persons with meaningful access to Federally assisted programs and activities.

IX. Application to Specific Types of Recipients

GSA's recipients are in excess of 66,000 and represent State, county, city and local government agencies *e.g.*, transportation departments, parks/recreation departments, education departments, labor departments, health departments, correctional facilities/police departments, emergency 9-1-1, local fire departments (to include volunteer fire departments; housing authorities; schools (public and private); hospitals, health clinics, medical centers; day care centers, to include Head Start; homeless shelters, domestic abuse shelters, food banks, and other eligible non-profits.

The requirements of the Title VI regulations, as clarified by this guidance, supplement, but do not supplant, constitutional and other statutory or regulatory provisions that may require LEP services. Thus, a proper application of the four-factor analysis and compliance with the Title VI regulations does not replace

constitutional or other statutory protections mandating information, warnings and notices in languages other than English, such as in the criminal justice context. Rather, this guidance clarifies the Title VI regulatory obligation to address, in appropriate circumstances and in a reasonable manner, the language assistance needs of LEP individuals beyond those required by the Constitution or statutes and regulations other than the Title VI regulations.

The following examples are provided to assist recipients in determining their responsibilities with regard to LEP individuals:

(1) A county has very few residents who are LEP. However, many Vietnamese-speaking LEP motorists go through a major freeway running through the county, which connects two areas with high populations of Vietnamese speaking LEP individuals. As a result, the Traffic Division of the county court processes a large number of LEP persons, but it has taken no steps to train staff or provide forms or other language access in that Division because of the small number of LEP individuals in the county. The Division should assess the number and proportion of LEP individuals processed by the Division and the frequency of such contact. With those numbers high, the Traffic Division may find that it needs to provide key forms or instructions in Vietnamese. It may also find, from talking with community groups, that many older Vietnamese LEP individuals do not read Vietnamese well, and that it should provide oral language services as well. The court may already have Vietnamese-speaking staff competent in interpreting in a different section of the court; it may decide to hire a Vietnamese-speaking employee who is competent in the skill of interpreting; or it may decide that a telephonic interpretation service suffices.

(2) A shelter for victims of domestic violence is operated by a recipient of GSA funds and located in an area where 15 percent of the women in the service area speak Spanish and are LEP. Seven percent of the women in the service area speak various Chinese dialects and are LEP. The shelter uses community volunteers to help translate vital outreach materials into Chinese (which is one written language despite many dialects) and Spanish. The shelter hotline has a menu providing key information, such as location, in English, Spanish, and two of the most common Chinese dialects. Calls for immediate assistance are handled by the bilingual staff. The shelter has one counselor and several volunteers fluent

in Spanish and English. Some volunteers are fluent in different Chinese dialects and in English. The shelter works with community groups to access interpreters in the several Chinese dialects that they encounter. Shelter staff trains the community volunteers in the sensitivities of domestic violence intake and counseling. Volunteers sign confidentiality agreements. The shelter is looking for a grant to increase its language capabilities despite its tiny budget. These actions constitute strong evidence of compliance.

(3) A small childcare center has three LEP parents (two who speak Mandarin and one speaks Spanish) whose English-speaking children attend its childcare center on a regular basis. The center has a staff of six, and has limited financial resources to afford to hire bilingual staff, contract with a professional interpreter service, or translate written documents. To accommodate the language needs of their LEP parents, the Center made arrangements with a Chinese and a Hispanic community organization for trained and competent volunteer interpreters in the appropriate language, and with a telephone interpreter language line, to interpret during parent meetings and to orally translate written documents. There have been no client complaints of inordinate delays or other service related problems with respect to LEP clients. The assistance that the childcare center is providing will probably be considered appropriate, given the center's resources, the size of staff, and the size of the LEP population. Thus, OCR would consider this strong evidence of compliance.

(4) A county social service program that administers the State's welfare and health programs has a large budget. Their service area encompasses an eligible service population of 500,000. Thirty-five hundred individuals in the serviced population are LEP and speak a Chinese dialect; 4,000 individuals in the serviced population are LEP and speak Spanish; 2000 individuals in the serviced population are LEP and speak Vietnamese; and 400 individuals are LEP and speak Vietnamese. The county has translated vital documents, *i.e.*, applications and program brochures, into Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Therefore, with regard to translation of vital documents, OCR would consider this strong evidence of compliance, consistent with the safe harbor provision in GSA's guidance. Additionally, the county should adequately address and provide needed interpretation services to their LEP clients (*i.e.*, hiring bilingual staff or

contracting with a language service provider).

Permanent Versus Seasonal Populations. In many communities, resident populations change over time or season. For example, in some resort communities, populations swell during peak vacation periods, many times exceeding the number of permanent residents of the jurisdiction. In other communities, primarily agricultural areas, transient populations of workers may require increased services during the relevant harvest season. This dynamic demographic ebb and flow can also dramatically change the size and nature of the LEP community likely to come into contact with the recipient. Thus, recipients should not limit their analysis to numbers and percentages of permanent residents. In assessing factor one—the number or proportion of LEP individuals—emergency service providers should consider any significant but temporary changes in a jurisdiction's demographics.

[FR Doc. 03-18658 Filed 7-22-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6820-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

Notice of Meeting of a Health Care Policy and Research Special Emphasis Panel

In accordance with section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C., Appendix 2), announcement is made of a Health Care Policy and Research Special Emphasis Panel (SEP) meeting.

The Health Care Policy and Research Special Emphasis Panel is a group of experts in fields related to health care research who are invited by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and agree to be available, to conduct on an as needed basis, scientific reviews of applications for AHRQ support. Individual members of the Panel do not attend regularly-scheduled meetings and do not serve for fixed terms or long periods of time. Rather, they are asked to participate in particular review meetings which require their type of expertise.

Substantial segments of the upcoming SEP meeting listed below will be closed to the public in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, section 10(d) of 5 U.S.C., Appendix 2 and 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(6). Grant applications for AHRQ Partnerships for Quality Competing Continuation (R18)

Awards are to be reviewed and discussed at this meeting. These discussions are likely to reveal personal information concerning individuals associated with the applications. This information is exempt from mandatory disclosure under the above-cited statutes.

SEP Meeting on: AHRQ Partnerships for Quality Competing Continuation (R18) Awards.

Date: August 5, 2003 (open on August 5 from 11 a.m. to 11:10 a.m. and closed for the remainder of the Teleconference).

Place: John M. Eisenberg, M.D. Building, 540 Gaither Road, Room 2020, Rockville, Maryland 20850.

Contact Person: Anyone wishing to obtain a roster of members, agenda or minutes of the nonconfidential portions of this meeting should contact Mrs. Bonnie Campbell, Committee Management Officer, Office of Research Review, Education and Policy, AHRQ, 540 Gaither Road, Room 2038, Rockville, Maryland 20850, Telephone (301) 427-1554.

Agenda items for this meeting are subject to change as priorities dictate.

Dated: July 14, 2003.

Carolyn M. Clancy,
Director.

[FR Doc. 03-18718 Filed 7-22-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4160-90-M

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Disease, Disability, and Injury Prevention and Control Special Emphasis Panel: Collection of Specimen Panels for Validation for Incidence Assays, Contract Solicitation Number 2003-N-00872; Correction

SUMMARY: This notice was published in the **Federal Register** on July 8, 2003, Volume 68, Number 130, Page 40676. The meeting date, time and location have been revised.

In accordance with section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announces the following meeting:

Name: Disease, Disability, and Injury Prevention and Control Special Emphasis Panel (SEP): Collection of Specimen Panels for Validation for Incidence Assays, Contract Solicitation Number 2003-N-00872.

Action: The meeting times and dates have been revised as follows: