

# Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Protocol



WVCAN

*The West Virginia Child Advocacy Network (WVCAN) and its member Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are committed to ensuring that all children and families have meaningful access to CAC services. This protocol is meant to improve access to these services for clients with limited English proficiency.*

## **1. Do I need to call an interpreter?**

Consider providing language assistance, even when you think an individual's English is "probably good enough." It is easy to overestimate a person's English language skills, particularly if she or he appears to understand you. A person may not have limited English proficiency in some contexts, but may in others (e.g. a person who can ask for simple directions in English may not be sufficiently proficient to understand and answer questions related to CAC services).

### **Establish a connection**

- Always address the individual(s) in the first person and look at them during the conversation.
- Be aware that excluding someone with limited English proficiency during long conversations with English-speaking individuals can sometimes convey negative messages. Wait until an interpreter can be contacted to explain the communications to the client and enable her or his participation. Otherwise, that individual may construe such communication as an indication of bias.
- Consider and plan for the possibility that an individual with limited English proficiency may also have a disability.

## **2. Determine the LEP person's native language.**

Do not make assumptions about what language an individual is most comfortable with. For example, someone may commonly communicate in Spanish with their family, but their native language is Arabic.

Certified Languages International, WVCAN's telephonic interpretation service provider, has sent materials to assist in this process. Please refer to the 8.5 x 11 sheet or yellow brochure included with this protocol. Keep these handy at your CAC so that clients who do not speak English may point to their native language printed on the sheet. It may be helpful to post the 8.5 x 11 sheet somewhere in your CAC for quick reference. Should your client not read their native language, call the telephonic language line and they will assist you in determining the individual's native language.

## **3. Access the telephonic language line.**

It is not sufficient to rely on family, friends, and acquaintances to translate. For example, someone may fluently speak both French and English, but without specialized training may not be able to accurately communicate what was said in one language to the other.

All CACs in West Virginia have access to telephonic interpretation through WVCAN’s contract with Certified Languages International. Calls are not recorded.

**Dial:** 1-800-225-5254

**Customer Code:** 39259

**What they need to know:**

- You are calling from the West Virginia Child Advocacy Network.
- Requested language for interpretation services.
- Name of your CAC.

You also have phone stickers and a postcard-sized instruction flyer included with this protocol to keep handy for quick reference on how to access these services.



**NOTE**

It is the CAC’s responsibility to develop a plan for situations where a call needs to be recorded for investigative purposes. The service is not part of our contract with Certified Languages International.

**4. Inform your client of their rights to services.**

The reference materials that allow the client to point to their native language informs them that the CAC can access an interpreter at no cost to them. If necessary, the interpreter can also relay this message. Once an interpreter is on the line, make sure that they understand their right to access these services confidentially and at no cost to them.

**5. Ensure that the information the interpreter provides is clear for your client.**

Through the interpreter, ensure that the individual(s) you are working with understand the conversation and allow time for them to ask questions. Before the end of your conversation, make sure to address the ways they can access the CAC and CAC services after this initial meeting.

**Working effectively through an interpreter**

- Be creative in asking questions of the client—you may have to ask the same question several ways before eliciting a response. Don’t expect the interpreter to “fill in the blanks.”
- When working with an interpreter, use short simple sentences that are free of idioms. Avoid compound phrases, double negatives, rambling phrases, colloquialisms, etc.