

Brazoria County Limited English Proficiency Plan

I. Purpose and Authority

The purpose of this Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) Plan is to clarify the responsibilities of Brazoria County departments receiving federal financial assistance and to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities to LEP persons. This plan also serves to show Brazoria County’s commitment to ensure meaningful access to all Brazoria County programs by persons with limited English proficiency.

All Brazoria County department heads or elected officials overseeing programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance must make a meaningful attempt to provide LEP persons with a means of effective communication.

II. General Policy Statement

It is the policy of Brazoria County to provide timely meaningful access for LEP persons to all Brazoria County programs and activities. Language assistance services shall be provided to persons with LEP whenever a person with LEP requests language assistance services, as set forth herein.

III. Limited English Proficiency Plan Summary

An “LEP person” is defined as an individual who does not speak English as his or her primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

Brazoria County has developed this Plan to help identify reasonable steps to ensure LEP persons receive meaningful access to Brazoria County programs. This Plan details procedures on how to identify a person who may need language assistance, the ways in which assistance may be provided, training staff, how to notify LEP persons that assistance is available, and information for future Plan updates.

To decide what reasonable steps Brazoria County departments should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons, Brazoria County considers the following:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely encountered by the Brazoria County program, activity, or service;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the Brazoria County program, activity, or service;
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the County; and
4. The resources available to Brazoria County and overall costs.

A brief description of the above considerations is provided in the following section.

IV. Four Factors

- 1. Number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely encountered by the Brazoria County program, activity, or service.***

Brazoria County and Brazoria County departments will use various methods to identify LEP persons with whom they have contact. These may include:

- Current and past experiences with LEP persons encountered by the department's staff: The number and type of such encounters will be periodically analyzed to determine the breadth and scope of the language services required.
- Most recent U.S. Census Bureau data: Brazoria County and Brazoria County departments shall analyze data from the most recent U.S. Census Bureau data, regarding languages spoken in Brazoria County as well as those who self-identified that they spoke English less than "very well."

Brazoria County has examined the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data, 2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, for Brazoria County, Texas, and was able to make the following approximations:

- 26.6% of the Brazoria County population 5 years of age and older speaks a language other than English at home. 8.2% of the population 5 years of age and older reported that they do not speak English very well.
- People speaking Spanish at home comprised the largest language group speaking a language other than English at home. 19.9% of the population 5 years of age and older speak Spanish at home. Of those, 29.9% reported they do not speak English very well.
- 4.3% of the Brazoria County population 5 years of age and older speaks Asian or Pacific Island languages at home. Of those, 41.2% reported they do not speak English very well.
- 1.7% of the Brazoria County population 5 years of age and older speaks Other Indo-European languages at home. Of those, 22.6% reported they do not speak English very well.

- 0.7% of the population 5 years of age and older speaks an unspecified or other language at home. Of those, 19.0% reported they do not speak English very well.

2. *Frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the Brazoria County program, activity, or service.*

In addition to research conducted to identify LEP persons in Brazoria County, Brazoria County departments shall also annually compile information regarding the frequency of contact with LEP persons. The more frequent the contact and/or the number of requests for languages other than English, the more likely that language services for a specific language will be needed.

Department heads and elected officials should create a record of language assistance services provided, which can assist in accurately identifying and addressing the changing needs of their LEP communities, which in turn, can help identify changes to the quantity or type(s) of language assistance services.

Actions taken for a department that serves an LEP person one time or occasionally will be different from those that serve LEP persons every day. Brazoria County departments will assess the frequency at which staff has or could possibly have contact with LEP persons.

3. *Nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the County.*

Brazoria County recognizes that within the range of programs and services it provides, the nature of some programs and services may be more important to LEP persons than others.

4. *The resources available to Brazoria County and overall costs.*

Brazoria County departments shall assess their available resources that could be used for providing LEP assistance. This shall include identifying which staff and volunteer language interpreters are readily available (Attachment 6-A); how much a professional interpreter and translation service would cost; which department documents should be translated; which organizations the department could partner with for interpreter and translation services or outreach efforts; which financial resources could be used to provide assistance; and what level of staff training is needed.

After analyzing the above four factors, Brazoria County developed the LEP Plan outlined in the following section for assisting LEP persons.

V. How to Identify an LEP Person Who Needs Language Assistance

Below are tools that may be used by Brazoria County departments and elected officials to help identify persons who may need language assistance:

- Have language identification cards or Census Bureau “I speak cards” at customer service counters in Brazoria County departments which invite LEP persons to identify their language needs to staff. While staff may not be able to provide translation assistance at the initial contact with an LEP person, the cards are an excellent tool to identify language needs for future contacts.
- Posting notices in commonly encountered languages notifying LEP persons of language assistance to encourage LEP to self-identify.

VI. Language Assistance Measures

When an interpreter is needed, in person or on the telephone, staff should first determine what language is required. Bilingual staff may be able to assist with communications with LEP persons. The Title VI Coordinator will compile a list of individuals who fluently write or speak a language other than English and distribute to the department heads and elected officials. (Attachment 6-A). If staff cannot assist, private interpreter services can provide translation services for a reasonable fee.

Use of informal interpreters, such as family or friends of the LEP person seeking service, or other customers, is discouraged, with minor children generally prohibited from acting as interpreters. The use of informal interpreters shall be allowed at the insistence of the LEP person or in emergencies, but shall be documented and subject to approval of a supervisor.

No staff may suggest or require an LEP person provide an interpreter in order to receive services.

VII. Staff Training

Brazoria County department heads and elected officials are required to fully understand, direct staff to comply, and implement the LEP Plan and reinforce its importance. The Title VI Coordinator is also available to assist with information and training requests. All staff will be provided with the LEP Plan and will be educated on procedures and services available. LEP Plan information will also be a part of the staff orientation process for new employees. Training topics may include the following:

- Brazoria County LEP policy and procedures;

- Understanding Title VI LEP responsibilities;
- What language assistance services Brazoria County offers;
- Use of Employee Language Assistance Report;
- Documentation of language assistance requests; and
- How to handle a complaint.

VIII. Providing Notice of Available Language Services to LEP Persons

Signs will be posted stating that language assistance is available in public areas, such as intake areas, customer service areas, and other entry points to Brazoria County facilities. Statements may also be placed in outreach documents indicating that language services are available from Brazoria County.

IX. Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan

Brazoria County will reevaluate the LEP Plan on a regular basis. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed and updated when data from the 2020 U.S. Census is available or when the County's Title VI Coordinator begins logging statistically significant requests for interpretive or translation services in the County's service area. Consideration shall be given to changes in demographics, types of services, or other needs when determining the frequency of LEP Plan reevaluation. Each reevaluation should examine all Plan components and assesses the following:

- How many LEP persons were encountered and what languages?
- Were their needs met?
- What is the current LEP population in Brazoria County?
- Has there been a change in the types of languages where translation services are needed?
- Is there still a need for continued language assistance for previously identified Brazoria County programs? Are there other programs that should be included?
- Has Brazoria County's or a specific Brazoria County department's available resources, technology, staff, and financial costs changed?
- Has Brazoria County or a specific department fulfilled the goals of the LEP Plan?
- Were complaints received?
- Are identified sources of assistance still available and viable?

Brazoria County Department heads must maintain the data annually, for the fiscal year ending on September 30th. Attachment 6-B should be completed for the fiscal year and returned to the Title VI Coordinator by September 30th of each year.

X. Dissemination of the Brazoria County Limited English Proficiency Plan

Brazoria County will post the LEP Plan on its website. Copies of the LEP Plan will be provided to any person or agency requesting a copy. Any questions or comments regarding this LEP Plan should be directed to the Brazoria County Title VI Coordinator at:

Curtis Fitzgerald
Brazoria County Title VI Coordinator
Brazoria County Administration Building
237 E. Locust, Suite 203
Angleton, Texas 77515
(979) 864-1575 (phone)
CurtisF@brazoriacountytx.gov (email)

XI. Complaints

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, Brazoria County, Texas has in place a Title VI complaint procedure.

Any person who believes that he or she, individually, as a member of any specific class, has been subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, as amended, may file a complaint with Brazoria County. A complaint may also be filed by a representative on behalf of such a person. All Title VI complaints will be referred to Brazoria County's Title VI Coordinator for review and action. The complaint shall then be handled according to Brazoria County's Title VI complaint procedures.

To request additional information on Brazoria County's nondiscrimination obligations, to file a Title VI Complaint, or to request a complaint form, an individual may submit a written request or complaint to:

Curtis Fitzgerald
Brazoria County Title VI Coordinator
Brazoria County Administration Building
237 E. Locust, Suite 203
Angleton, Texas 77515
(979) 864-1575 (phone)
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