



PROGRAM & PROJECT QUICK LOOK

NEBRASKA JUDICIAL BRANCH LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM

A trusted, collaborative, and respected catalyst for and provider of professional language interpreters and translators in Nebraska State Courts and Probation Services, ensuring the public's constitutional right of equal access to justice regardless of the language spoken..

ORIGIN & AUTHORIZATION

- Nebraska Revised Statutes §§ 25-2401 to 25-2407 (Interpreters in Court Proceedings)
- Nebraska Revised Statutes §§ 20-150 to 20-159 (Interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
- Nebraska Revised Statutes § 29-2259 (Probation administrator; office; salaries; expenses; office space; prepare budget; interpreter services.)
- Nebraska Court Rules § 6-701et seq. (Interpreters in Court)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

It is the declared policy of the State that the constitutional rights of persons unable to communicate very well in the English language cannot be fully protected unless interpreters are available to assist such persons in legal proceedings. The Language Access Program (LAP) recruits, tests, and certifies court interpreters and coordinates the appointment of qualified interpreters across the state to facilitate the communication of Limited English Proficient (LEP) participants in the Nebraska Judicial Branch.

PRIORITIES

Provide high quality, efficient and cost-effective language access across the state of Nebraska, regardless of the language spoken by LEP court and probation users and deliver information and support to judges, court staff, and probation staff. This is accomplished by:

- Providing recommendations on interpreter pay and classification after conducting a multi-state analysis.
- Based on LAP statistics, designing a staffing model to meet the stated priority.
- Evaluating Nebraska Supreme Court rules on current certification levels and requirements to facilitate and support interpreters becoming certified.
- Implementing an automated system to receive requests and send them out to interpreters.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Translated 30 juvenile and adult Guardianship/Conservatorship forms and their 30 corresponding instructions from English into Spanish. Both the forms and instructions have been uploaded to the Nebraska Judicial Branch webpage and are available to the public.
- Designated specific days and times to have interpreters available to interpret for LEP individuals. These designated blocks have grown to 192 across the state each month, enhancing timely and cost-effective language access in Nebraska courts. Monthly blocks are broken down by language into 175 Spanish, 10 Karen, 5 Nuer, 1 Swahili, and 1 Somali block.
- Expanded partnership with University of Nebraska-Kearney Translation and Interpretation program to include shadowing in both the Courts and Probation.
- Transitioned from a contract Interpreter Scheduler/Coordinator at the Sarpy County Courthouse to a full-time employed Interpreter Scheduler/Coordinator to meet the increased volume of requests.
- Began tracking all document translation requests to include number of words as well as associated minutes and cost.
- Provided education on LAP for new judges, clerk magistrates, clerks and bailiffs. Education included LAP's scope, hybrid model of interpretation, system vs. silo thinking, and identified opportunities for a smoother experience for all.

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LOOKING FORWARD

- Commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Nebraska Supreme Court recognizing language access in the courts in September 2023.
- Reorganize website and update resources for a more user-friendly experience for the public and Judicial Branch personnel.
- Redesign Court Interpreter Orientation to increase the language diversity of candidates and increase the number of registered and certified interpreters.
- Expand the pool of bilingual employees and provide continuing education opportunities around language access.

CONTACTS

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REFERENCES

Nebraska Judicial Branch Language Access Plan: <https://nejudicial.com/LanguageAccessPlan2019>

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