

Language Access & Accessibility In New Jersey Government



In 2024, New Jersey adopted a law mandating language translation and interpretation services across state government entities. The passage of this legislation represents an important step toward ensuring that state programs, services, and resources are accessible to all New Jersey residents.

The law requires all state government entities that provide direct services to the public to provide interpretation services and to translate vital documents into at least seven of the most common non-English languages spoken in New Jersey.

WHAT DOES THE LAW DO?

The law mandates that all state government entities that provide direct services to the public must offer interpretation services, which may be provided in person through a qualified interpreter, by phone, or through video interpretation services. While state agencies must begin implementing the obligatory services on a rolling basis, all agencies will provide interpretation services by January 2025.

In addition to interpretation, agencies must also translate important documents.

By January 12, 2025, state entities that provide direct services to the public must translate all vital documents into the 5 most common non-English languages spoken in New Jersey:

- Spanish
- Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)
- Portuguese
- Korean
- Gujarati

By January 12, 2026, agencies must translate all vital documents to the next 2 most common non-English spoken languages:

- Arabic
- Haitian Creole

WHAT AGENCIES ARE COVERED BY THE LAW?

This law applies to all state government agencies, commissions, boards, bureaus, and other offices that provide direct services to the public, including, but not limited to:

- Motor Vehicle Commission
- NJ Family Care and GetCoveredNJ
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Labor and Unemployment Offices
- Office of the Public Defender
- Department of Education

Please note that this list is not exhaustive; all state government offices that provide direct services to the public must comply with the law's interpretation and translation requirements.

For a longer list of state agencies, check the State of New Jersey's Departments/Agencies Database [here](#).

State government entities are required to display informational posters notifying the public of the available translation and interpretation services.

- Every agency subject to this law is required to prominently display informational posters in multiple languages telling visitors where, when, and how to access translation or interpretation services.
- Each agency office must have printed and/or downloadable “I Speak” cards that the public can use to identify the translation or interpretation services they need.

WHAT DOCUMENTS MUST BE TRANSLATED FOR THE PUBLIC?

Only “Vital Documents” must be translated. The law defines “Vital Documents” broadly, to include documents with legal information about accessing, keeping, losing, or being denied program services or benefits; documents required by law; and documents that explain legal rights.

Examples of vital documents include, but are not limited to:

- Notices regarding the reduction, denial, or termination of benefits
- Informational documents regarding access to or eligibility for public services or benefits
- Intake forms
- Complaint forms

The new law does not require these agencies to accept responses to an application, form, or other document in any language other than English, except where other laws require this.

State agencies are not required to provide translations for “vital records” such as birth certificates, death certificates, and marriage licenses. The new law also does not require translation of driver’s licenses or other government-issued identifications, public records, and reports unrelated to program services or benefits.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT AN AGENCY’S INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION SERVICES?

Every state government entity covered under this law must publish a language access plan on their website that explains, among other things, when and how the agency plans to provide language assistance services, as well as a list of all available translated documents. This plan must also include how the public may contact the entity’s designated language access coordinator regarding any language access issues. The language access plans must be evaluated, updated, and published every three years.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM MISTREATED BASED ON MY RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, OR NATIONALITY?

Under New Jersey’s Law Against Discrimination, you can report discrimination, including discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and nationality, to the Attorney General’s Division of Civil Rights (DCR) by filing a complaint. Learn more about the complaint process [here](#) or by scanning the QR code.

DCR provides accessibility for People with Limited English Proficiency. DCR’s Bias Investigation Access System is currently available in English and Spanish while this law takes effect. DCR also offers translation services for people with limited English proficiency who speak other languages.

Call 1.833.NJDCR4U (833-653-2748) or email NJDCR4U@njcivilrights.gov to request assistance in your language.

**SCAN TO FILE
A COMPLAINT**



****This resource is solely for your information, and not legal advice. If you need legal advice on accessing state benefits and services, contact a lawyer.***