

Guidelines

Title:	Bilingual and Multilingual Roles- DHS Staff Only
Related to:	DHS OHA 010-013-01
Effective date:	04/01/2019

Purpose

This document outlines the roles of bilingual staff, explains the difference between a bilingual staff person and an interpreter and provides examples of the appropriate agency use of their bilingual skills in alignment with agency expectations.

Guidelines

1. Bilingual staff:

- a. Are people who are completely fluent in two languages.
 - b. Are able to conduct the business of the workplace in either of the two languages they are fluent in.
 - c. Can assist in meeting the Title VI and Executive Order 13166 requirement for federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities to ensure meaningful access to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons.
2. Bilingual staff can be used as part of a broader effort to ensure meaningful access by having them conduct business with the agencies' LEP clients directly in the clients' primary language. Social service workers and others frequently are also called upon to communicate directly with the public in languages other than English.
 3. The use of bilingual staff does not involve interpretation or the translation between languages. However, it does require fluency in the non-English language, including fluency in agency terminology. Such fluency should be assessed through the LTI testing process prior to relying on the bilingual employee for the provision of services.
 4. Many DHS staff have some proficiency in more than one language but are not completely bilingual. They may be able to greet a limited English proficient individual in his or her language, but not conduct agency business, for instance, in that language. The distinction is critical to ensure meaningful communication and appropriate allocation of resources. As valuable as bilingualism and ability to conduct monolingual communication in a language other than English can be, interpretation and translation require additional specific skills in addition to being fully fluent in two or more languages.
5. **Examples of use of a bilingual staff person for their speaking skills.**
 - a. Appropriate: Case manager is proficient Spanish speaking, gets called to front desk as someone is asking about their case that belongs to another worker. Case manager goes to assist customer, obtain info and explain the agency determination. This is consistent with role of a bilingual worker as they are doing the work they were hired for, even if not assigned that specific customer.
 - b. Inappropriate: Spanish proficient case manager gets asked to come to the front desk every Monday and Wednesday from 8:30-11am and help reception to schedule customer

appointments for a program that the case manager isn't involved in because the person that normally does it is not available on those days. This is not appropriate as it is not their normal work and it is an established pattern. Stepping in on rare occasion if proficient is different than being routinely given work that is outside of their position description.

6. Examples of use of a bilingual staff person for their writing skills.

- a. Appropriate: A self-sufficiency case manager or family coach is following up on a case plan and the customer prefers email. The family coach writes an email in the target language, asking about the goals that were set and any updates. This is not translating a document, it is part of their work as a bilingual worker.
- b. Inappropriate: Eligibility workers in APD or SSP need to send the customer a notice and although their classifications were not tested for written proficiency, they go ahead and send the notice in the target language. While this is not translation, there should not be writing done by bilingual staff whose position description does not include a writing requirement.

7. Use of an interpreter involves:

- a. Immediate communication of meaning from one language (the source language) into another (the target language).
 - b. An interpreter conveys meaning orally, while a translator conveys meaning from written text to written text. As a result, interpretation requires skills different from those needed for translation.
8. Interpreting is a complex task that combines several abilities beyond language competence in order to enable delivery of an effective professional interpretation in a given setting. Consequently, extreme care must be exercised in hiring interpreters and interpreting duties should be assigned to individuals within their performance level.
- a. Command of at least two languages is prerequisite to any interpreting task. The interpreter must be able to:
 - A. Comprehend two languages as spoken and written (if the language has a script).
 - B. Speak both languages.
 - C. Choose an expression in the target language that fully conveys and best matches the meaning of the source language.
 - b. From the standpoint of the user, a successful interpretation is one that faithfully and accurately conveys the meaning of the source language orally, reflecting the style, register, and cultural context of the source message, without omissions, additions or embellishments on the part of the interpreter.
9. In many circumstances, using a professional interpreter or translator will be both necessary and preferred.
10. DHS staff shall not be used for interpretation as currently there are no positions that require interpreter certification and more importantly using DHS staff for interpreters could be considered a conflict of interest.

11. Examples of using a bilingual worker for their speaking skills:

- a. Appropriate: A child welfare manager asks an available worker (from their program or another program in a shared office) who is bilingual proficient staff to explain to the family that there will be a family unity meeting and that there will be interpreters there to interpret for the non- or limited-English speaking family members. The worker could provide the meeting time, dates, overview of what to expect. This is appropriate as long as it is a conversation, not the worker actually interpreting what the manager is telling them to say to the family.
- b. Inappropriate: In a shared office, a child welfare manager asks for one of the APD support staff to interpret for a family unity meeting. This is not appropriate as our staff are not interpreters, their proficiency level requirements are not at interpreter level and it is a different skill set than for which they were hired. In these situations, it WOULD be appropriate to have that staff person explain to the monolingual parents that an interpreter is going to be hired for an upcoming family unity meeting.

12. **DHS|OHA managers and staff are required to take care using staff who are not bilingual certified but who can communicate in another language.**
- a. Many individuals have some proficiency in more than one language but are not completely bilingual. They may be able to greet a limited English proficient individual in his or her language, **but not conduct agency business** in that language.
 - b. DHS|OHA have employees that can communicate in another language that do not receive the differential either because there is not a measured need for the language in their geographic area or because their testing did not reach the required levels necessary for their classification.
 - c. There are many instances where we want to help make our participants feel as comfortable as possible and relating to them in their language is a great way to do this. What can non-bilingual staff do since they are not being paid for their bilingual skills?
 - A. Informal conversation in a non-English language with a participant is okay for an employee who is not receiving the differential to communicate with them.
 - B. When the conversation shifts to things that relate to DHS and our programs, including eligibility, plans, rules, and policies, we need to make sure that only those that are receiving the bilingual differential are speaking to them in a non-English language.
13. **Examples of using a non-bilingual proficient staff person for their speaking skills:**
- a. Appropriate: Customer has finished an appointment in a branch office, comes to the front desk speaking Vietnamese. Front desk worker has not been tested as proficient but does speak Vietnamese. The customer asks about the bus schedule out front. Worker can assist in Vietnamese to provide the bus schedule.
 - b. Inappropriate: This same customer as above now starts asking about other DHS programs they may be eligible to receive. At this point the front desk worker assisting would either need to find proficient Vietnamese speaking staff to assist or call a phone interpreter to continue the conversation.
 - c. Inappropriate: A Child Welfare manager asks a non-proficient staff person who speaks that language to inform the family a meeting is scheduled and that an interpreter will be available. Our non-proficient staff should not be doing any DHS business in a language other than English.
14. **Other considerations for the translation of written materials:**
- a. if a bilingual worker is in a position that includes written proficiency and would otherwise communicate information in an informal manner through email, text messaging, benefit notices or similar communication they may do it in the target language as well.
 - b. Formal written communications such as forms, newsletters or court documents should always be sent for translation and not be done by bilingual workers.
 - c. If a bilingual worker is in a position that does not include written proficiency, any written communications in the target language need to be sent for translation.
15. For child welfare and self -sufficiency program client specific requests submit form [CF0010A](#) to TRANSLATIONS.CAF@state.or.us
16. For all other requests, complete project request form DE1001 and email it to DHS-OHA.PublicationRequest@dhsaha.state.or.us

References

[Title VI 1964 Civil Rights Act](#)

[Federal Register Volume 68: DHHS Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance Recipients](#)

Forms referenced

DHS 1001 Publications and Creative Services project request

[CF0010A CAF Request for translation services](#)

Related policies

[DHS/OHA 010-013 Alternate formats and language access services](#)

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