



# New York City Department of Correction

## Language Access Implementation Plan FY 2025 – FY 2027

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynelle Maginley-Liddie".

**Lynelle Maginley-Liddie, Commissioner**  
NYC Department of Correction

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharif Nelson".

**Sharif Nelson, Executive Director of Program Operations**

Published: August 28, 2024

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Language Access Implementation Plan (LAIP) is a three-year plan intended to outline the Department of Correction's (DOC) specific actions and operational processes that will support the provision of meaningful language access services to individuals assigned to the agency's care and to provide a roadmap for improving the program over time. This LAIP includes:

- Development of a three-year departmental LAIP that is comprehensive, reviewed and approved by executive leadership, and published online.
- Reestablishment of a Language Access Coordinator (LAC) to oversee the implementation of this plan and the management of the DOC's Language Access Program (LAP). Contact information for this role will be made available and public on the agency's website.
- Description of how the DOC will be providing language access services. Determine the agency's capacity to manage and provide these services through agency staffing, vendor, contract agreements, and working with community-based organizations.
- Evaluation of the language access needs to service our population and constituents, including consideration of when, where, and in what way these services can and should be provided under various circumstances to include emergency preparedness and response.
- Explanation of the process by which the DOC will collect information about language access needs, how the agency can evaluate and prioritize these services, and outlining the service cost provision.
- Continued incorporation and consideration of language access services across all platforms and means of communication, using plain language whenever possible.
- Outline the development and management of a process for receiving, handling, and monitoring language access complaints in a timely manner.
- Presentation of a timeline that describes the development goals of the DOC's LAP with clearly defined steps, identified stakeholders, and troubleshooting guidelines and workaround strategies to ensure services are provided while the program is still undergoing development.

## **SECTION 1: Agency Mission**

DOC is dedicated to establishing and maintaining safe and humane jails that provide individuals in the Department's care with a path to successfully reenter their communities. Those in the Department's custody include individuals 18 years of age and older who are awaiting trial, who have been convicted and sentenced to less than one year of incarceration, individuals remanded for civil contempt and persons held on state parole warrants. Pursuant to New York's Raise the Age law, 16- and 17-year-olds were removed from Rikers Island prior to October 1, 2018. The Department operates seven facilities housing people in custody, all of which are located on Rikers Island. The Department also operates court-holding facilities in each of the five boroughs and two hospital prison wards.

## **SECTION 2: Language Access Policy**

The Department's goal is to create a policy that identifies the individuals within the Department responsible for managing and reporting on all aspects of a comprehensive LAP. Such a policy will build on the Department's existing language access protocols by assigning and prioritizing the people, programs, and information that need to be included and considered for language access services, outlining LAP operations, and identifying the owners and processes needed to provide language access directly. The policy will also outline the program support components and needs required by the applicable laws. To date, the Department is conducting a systemwide assessment of the agency operations, programs, and services. This work – in addition to the creation of this LAIP – has laid the groundwork for developing this program and its associated policies.

The Language Access Program will be managed by a dedicated unit within the Division of Programs and Community Partnerships (DPCP), whose mission is to directly interface with persons in custody to provide regular programmatic and social services support. The DOC has recently reestablished a position within DPCP that will serve as the Department's Language Access Coordinator (LAC).

## **SECTION 3: Language Access Needs Assessments**

The Department is currently conducting a system-wide assessment. Once completed, the Department's needs assessment will take into consideration all programs, services, and processes that may require language access services to access, understand, and participate in the process, as well as the space in which the program, service, or process takes place. There are three main types of spaces within DOC facilities, each with unique restrictions, and requirements: spaces accessible and available to people in custody, to members of the public, and for staff, contractors, and vendors; some spaces are accessible to all parties. The Department has developed the following roadmap to collect and analyze data that will inform LAP resource allocations and contract development:

- DOC plans to compile and analyze data captured via its existing new admission screening procedures to inform operations of the program and drive resource allocations appropriately.
  - When individuals enter DOC custody, there are several interviews and screenings that take place as part of the new admission process. Certain screenings record the English proficiency of people entering custody and identify any primary languages spoken other than English.
  - Individuals are also screened for Americans with Disabilities Act/Disabilities, Access, and Functional Needs (ADA/DAFN) considerations such as hearing or visual impairments. Information obtained in these screenings is self-reported.
- Assess the provision of services and information to the limited English proficiency person:

- Individuals in the Department’s custody, as well as those who access Department facilities, require language access services to understand agency rules, policies, and service opportunities, participate in programs and services that are offered, and to participate in other administrative procedures related to conditions of confinement. It is especially important that they understand the information the Department provides to them.
- Vendors, external contracted providers, volunteers, and visitors may require language access services to understand agency rules, policies, and service opportunities, as it relates to themselves and to individuals in custody with whom they may have contact.
- Assess the resources available to the agency and the costs of providing various types of language services:
  - Through internal assessments, the Department has begun compiling a list of language access needs and priority lists for document translation.
  - Facility walkthroughs have been conducted to assess posted informational documents in all physical spaces, to determine translation needs, resources, and available supports where they exist.
  - The Department is conducting a review of Departmental policies, rules guidelines, informational bulletins and memoranda, and other communications, to determine translation needs and priorities.

#### **SECTION 4: Notice of the Right to Language Access Services**

Notices of the right to language access services are currently posted in several locations throughout Department facilities. To enhance the language access signage, the LAP team has printed and laminated large-print versions of these notices. The large-print notices will be posted and maintained throughout the facilities in prominent locations so that individuals in custody are aware of their rights. In addition to posted notices, the Department recently revised the Persons in Custody (PIC) Handbook, which includes important information on DOC rules and operations and is distributed to all new admissions and will include a notice of language access rights in the English version and each of the official languages.

DOC is also exploring the means to translate informational and guidance documents made available in public access areas. This may involve printing basic FAQ materials in each of the official languages.

#### **SECTION 5: Provision of Language Access Services**

Multiple Departmental stakeholders participate in providing or supporting language access services. The LAC will ensure coordination and continuity between these divisions. These stakeholders include the following business units and roles:

- **Division of Programs and Community Partnerships** – Oversight and management of the DOC’s Language Access Program (LAP). Procurement and establishment of language access contracts for document translations.
- **IT Division** – Procurement and establishment of telephonic translation service contracts; Installation and technical support of language line telephones, TTY and closed captioning equipment, and software and technical support for video relay services.
- **Health Affairs Division** – Facilitation and management of Sign Language Interpretation and TTY Service contracts; Communication and coordination of language services involving health care and clinical services with H+H/Correctional Health Services (CHS), FDNY/EMS, and local area hospitals.
- **Office of Constituent Grievance Services (OCGS)** – Management and accountable for the lifecycle of all language access service complaints.
- **Legal Affairs Division** – Facilitation and management of translation and interpretation services involving adjudication proceedings, court appearances (both in-person and virtual), and legal documentation; Communication and coordination of language services involving legal services with DOC Court Facilities and the Department of Justice, as well as the NY State Correctional Oversight Commission and the Board of Corrections.
- **Intergovernmental Affairs Unit** – Facilitation of Departmental communications and liaising with City Hall, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), the City Council, and other elected officials regarding language access reporting and development.

**INTERPRETATION, TRANSLATION, DIGITAL & EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SERVICES**

**Document Translations**

The contracted vendor provides the DOC with document translations on request and provides project management assistance and quality assurance measures.

**Live Interpretation / General Services (Escorted)**

DOC’s IT Division has installed and maintains the service contract for telephonic interpretation services for people in custody and/or public visitors. These installed language lines are marked and mounted on the wall in different locations depending on the need for the service, the space available, and the presence of the necessary electrical and internet-based services. The installed units include a cover/lockbox for protection and security purpose, and two handheld receivers for service provision.

**ASL/Sign Language Interpretation & TTY**

Requests made for the hearing impaired are routed through and managed by one of the ADA Coordinators in the Health Affairs Division. Facilitation of these services is coordinated with the IT Division, which manages and maintains the modular/movable TTY equipment that can be installed on existing fax lines to connect to the services.

### **Online/Digital & Machine-Assisted Translations**

Managed by the IT Division and supported by a contracted vendor, individuals in custody have access to basic translation services for the user interface software installed on their institutional tablets. The service provider supports translation services for many of the official New York State and NYC-designated languages.

### **Emergency Services & Language Access**

The Department's Office of Preparedness and Resilience is engaged with NYC Emergency Management and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) on identifying potential strategies for maintaining – to the best of the Department's abilities – language access services during emergencies or if/when language access services are disrupted.

## **SECTION 6: Resource Planning**

As of the publication of this report, the Department of Correction is in the process of renewing the translation services contract for fiscal year 2025 and working to develop a multi-year contract to provide translation and interpretation services. Additionally, the Department will explore reviving a staff program that involves a survey of staff who speak languages other than English at a basic fluency level or above. On a voluntary basis, these staff may be utilized to facilitate communication of basic information on both a day-to-day and emergency basis, adding to the agency's ability to support language access. These services will be a supplement to, and not in place of, required document translation and offerings of third-party translators, as appropriate. Finally, the officially recognized languages in the City and State of New York represent sizeable populations of non-English-speaking communities that often have robust services, programs, and media organizations that can further augment our ability to provide language access services, and the Department will explore opportunities to partner with community-based organizations that can strengthen and support language access services.

## **SECTION 7: Training**

The Language Access Team will work with the Department's Training & Development Division to incorporate Language Access awareness training into the Department's new recruit training process, as well as in-service trainings. They will also work with the Human Resources Division to include awareness information in New Employee Orientation briefings for non-uniformed staff. DOC will explore means to disseminate information related to language access services and responsibilities for staff that are currently with the agency and have not received language access training to date.

## **SECTION 8: Continuous Improvement Planning**

The Department will utilize data collected through the new admission screening process (see Section 3) to continuously assess the demographics of the population in custody and related language access service needs. Demographic information is collected ongoing and currently utilized for other reporting and planning purposes and can be a resource in developing and

improving language access services. Data collected from complaints made to OCGS will also be used to inform service gaps and opportunities for improvement.

## **SECTION 9: Goals and Actions Planning**

The Department has the following commitments and goals for the next three fiscal year cycles:

### **Fiscal Year 2025 (1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025)**

- Continuation of annual contract and development of multi-year service contract for comprehensive language access services. The goal is to house as many of the services under one contract as possible and to ensure that budget allocations can meet service requirements over time.
- Complete and standardize a process for fully assessing all DOC facilities and locations where DOC operates and interacts with the public.
- This will help the agency identify areas of need and improvement and start a system of metrics to measure those improvements.
- Explore options for creating a network of bilingual and multilingual staff that can be trained on policy to assist with case management resolution of complaints and language access during emergencies.
- Explore options with the IT Division for how to expand language access on digital platforms. Research, analysis, and planning phase for creating a proposal that includes consideration of language access in future systems and application development to ensure it is supported as the program matures.
- Creation of a working group that includes all stakeholders to ensure communication and coordination for the success of the program.

### **Fiscal Year 2026 (1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026)**

- Establish an operational policy for how the Language Access Program functions and what it encompasses once the identified improvements in FY25 have been realized. This will ensure the continuation of the program over time and provide staff with the information needed to help support the program.
- Based on the operational policy, create a system of standards to facilitate assessments of current translations and program improvement planning over time.
- Based on the operational policy, explore options to develop and implement awareness training for staff and contractors to inform them about the program and how to utilize it.

### **Fiscal Year 2027 (1 July 2026 – 30 June 2027)**

- Explore options for producing audio recordings and video recordings that can be used for informational purposes for public awareness announcements, emergency announcements, and instructional videos.

- Look into developing social and program services for people with limited English proficiency.

**\*\*\*END OF DOCUMENT\*\*\***