

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Training Information

created 2007 for CMHPSM provider staff



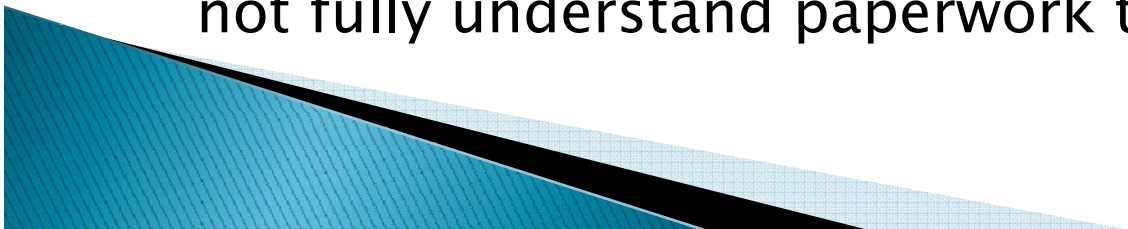
What does “LEP” mean?

- ▶ A person who does not speak English as their primary (first) language.
- ▶ A person who has a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

LEP clients may need special help in order
to access services or to benefit from
services

English as a Second Language (ESL)

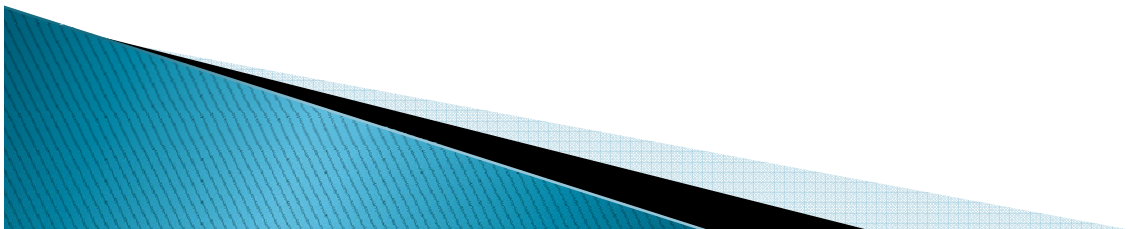
- ▶ Many LEP people are learning English, but they are not yet fluent.
- ▶ It can be hard to communicate in a non-native language, especially when a person is in a crisis or is very upset.
- ▶ It can be hard to understand “specialized” language, such as legal or medical communications.
- ▶ For example: if all communication is in English, an LEP client may not give accurate health information, or may not understand treatment options. An LEP client may not fully understand paperwork they are asked to sign.



Why do we need to accommodate other languages?

The United States government has never declared an official language in this country, so we must accommodate all languages.

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may be unable to verbally communicate, or may prefer to use American Sign Language

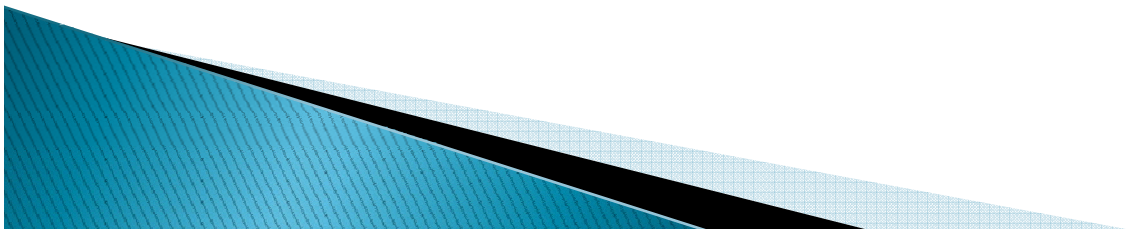


Federal Requirements

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 USC Section 2000d et. seq. states):

“No person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

If an LEP client cannot receive services in their native language when necessary, the federal government views that as discrimination on the basis of national origin. This would violate the Civil Rights Act cited above.

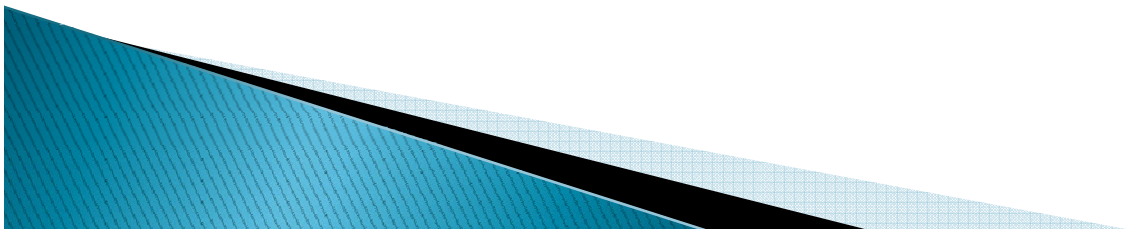


Federal Requirements (cont)

The federal government requires that agencies receiving federal funds (such as Medicaid) take the following steps. The State of Michigan also includes these requirements in the community mental health contracts.

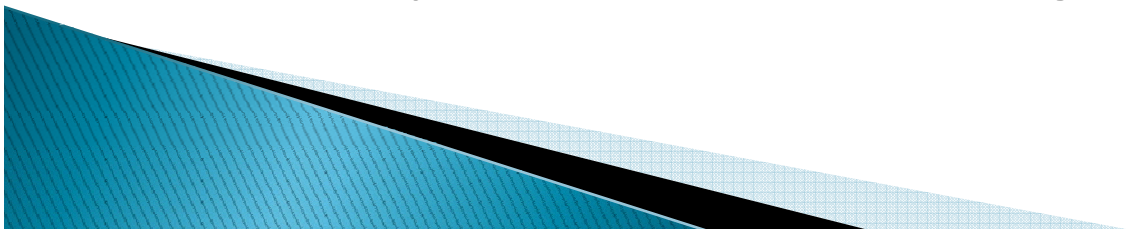
1. Assess the area you serve to identify non-English languages that are commonly spoken in your area.
2. Assess how often your agency serves LEP clients.
3. Assess the importance of the services your agency provides, and whether those services are available elsewhere.
4. Ensure the resources are available at your agency to implement services that would support LEP clients.

After completing these steps, your agency should create a policy and procedures for serving LEP individuals.



Federal Requirements (cont)

- ▶ Each person has a legal right to the services of a Translator at no cost to them.
- ▶ “Interpretation Services Available” notices should be posted in area where consumers can easily and clearly see them (i.e. lobby, front desk, front door)
- ▶ “I Speak” cards should be available in the entrance area
- ▶ Never suggest that a consumer bring their own translator or that they allow a minor or another consumer to translate for them– doing so is a clear violation of their civil rights and may subject both you and your agency to legal action



Agency Policies and Procedures

- ▶ Do you know if there are any commonly-spoken non-English languages in the community your agency serves?
- ▶ Do you know which languages your agency can accommodate when providing services?
- ▶ Do you know what steps you should follow to assist an LEP client that you are working with?
- ▶ Do you have communication tools (Posters, I Speak cards, etc.) which are intended to help people identify what language they speak so you are able to provide consumers with the services they need?

If you don't know, be sure to find out!

