

OLA QUARTERLY

Official Newsletter of the Office of Language Access, State of Hawai'i

'O ka 'ōlelo ke ola - Language is Life



THE 2ND ANNUAL HAWAI'I CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE ACCESS

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The 2nd Annual Hawai'i Conference on Language Access, *Ho'opono: Plan Implementation and Promising Practices*, was held on September 28, 2009, at the Hawai'i State Capitol Auditorium. A crowd of over 200 attendees, including legislators, administrators, public access service providers, interpreters, translators, and students, packed the auditorium to hear influential individuals from Washington D.C., New York, California, and Hawai'i, speak about various issues related to language access.



John Transviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO), delivers his speech during the opening of the 2nd Annual Hawai'i Conference on Language Access.

The keynote speech was delivered by John Trasviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO), which administers and enforces federal laws and establishes policies that make sure all Americans have equal access to the housing of their choice.

Other speakers and panelists shared their experiences and insights pertaining to resources available in Hawai'i, the implementation of language access programs at their respective organizations, issues being faced, challenges, lessons learned, and success stories from agencies across the nation. Based on feedback from the evaluations, attendees enjoyed the conference and hope to utilize the knowledge gained to improve their own agency's language access services.

Amidst these challenging economic times, the OLA expresses its sincere gratitude to our sponsors, especially The Office of Minority Health San Francisco, Bank of Hawai'i, viaLanguage, and all the other organizations, speakers, and volunteers involved in helping make the conference a success.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Aloha! Welcome to the Fall 2009 edition of our quarterly newsletter. During the past quarter, the office continued to work with 17 federally-funded state agencies on the submission of their revised language access plans as required by law. As of this writing, five agencies are still working on submitting their plans. In addition, the office has started scheduling monitoring visits with the eight non-federally funded state agencies. We hope to finish our monitoring work for this year by early November.

Much time and effort was spent by both the office and the Language Access Advisory Council in planning and preparing for the 2nd Annual Hawai'i Statewide Conference on Language Access, which was held on September 28, 2009. It was attended by more than 200 participants and was a great success; feedback has been very positive. The conference was almost completely funded through partnerships with federal, private, and non-profit organizations. Many thanks to them for their support to the office and for language access in Hawai'i. Much mahalo also to the staff and conference committee for all their hard work.

On a sad note, we will be bidding "Aloha" to the OLA's office staff on November 20, 2009, whose job positions have been impacted by the state's severe lack of funds. Steps are being taken to address the needs of the office and ensuring continued service to our immigrant community. I wish to take this opportunity to thank and recognize all staff for their hard work, commitment, dedication to language access, and compassion for our LEP community.

BANK OF HAWAI'I INTERNATIONAL BANKING DIVISION & LANGUAGE ACCESS

Betty Brow, Executive Vice-President of Bank of Hawaii's International Banking Division (IBD) and State of Hawai'i Language Access Advisory Council member, was the guest speaker at the Hawai'i State Language Access Coordinators' meeting on July 22, 2009. She discussed the bank's efforts in assisting international individuals and businesses, foreign visitors, and the various ethnic communities within the state.

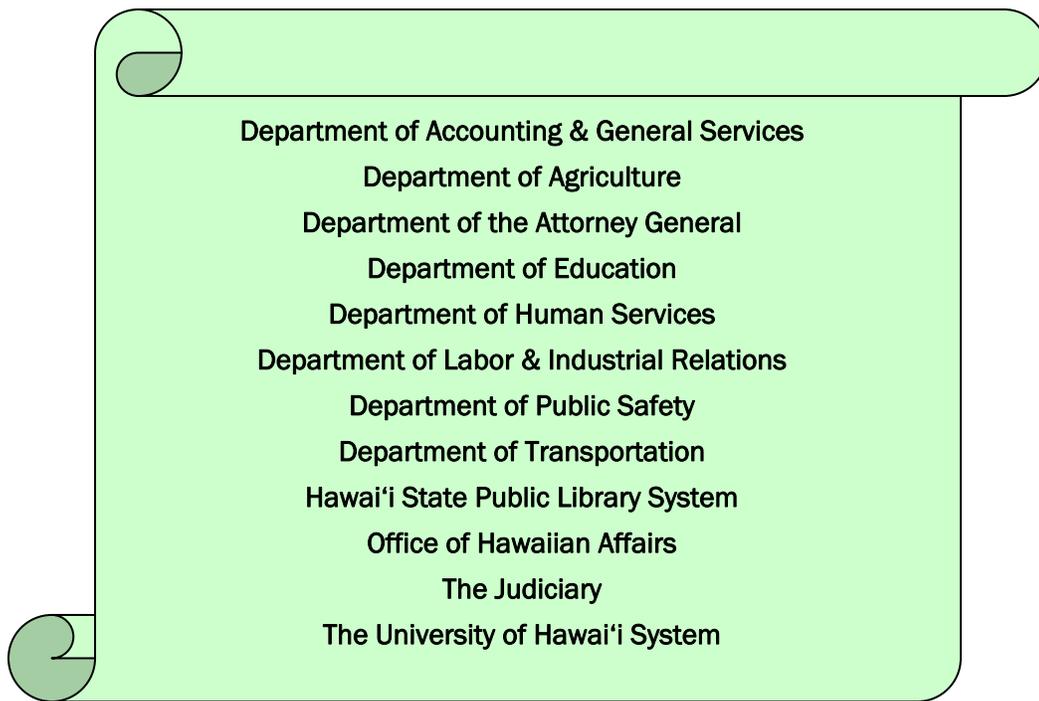


The IBD is currently comprised of five business teams with language capabilities. These are Japan, Korea, China/Taiwan, Philippines, and the International Private Banking Team. Staff members are located in seven branch locations and utilize their language skills as well as cultural knowledge to successfully attract and retain clients. IBD employees provide assistance in facilitating communications between bank staff and limited English proficient customers, via telephone or in person as needed.

Marketing and outreach efforts include brochures and a website translated into five languages, a multilingual Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, and advertising, promotions, or news, translated into the target audiences' appropriate language. Videos in Japanese and Mandarin Chinese will soon be available on the bank website and the International Banking Division staff also actively participate in various non-profit, ethnic community, and chamber organizations. For more information about Bank of Hawaii's International Banking Division's efforts, visit the Bankoh website at www.boh.com.

STATE AGENCIES SUBMIT REVISED LANGUAGE ACCESS PLANS FOR 2009

The Hawai'i State Language Access Law requires all state agencies receiving federal financial assistance to file an initial language access plan with the Executive Director of the Office of Language Access no later than July 1, 2007, and every two years thereafter. *HRS § 371-34(b) (2006)* The OLA would like to recognize and thank the agencies below for diligently working on their plans and following through with this requirement by the July 1, 2009 deadline. A report detailing the various state agencies' efforts in regards to this will be sent to the Governor and Legislature by the end of the year.



MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE WEBINAR

On July 24, 2009, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) hosted a webinar, "Is This Working? Assessment and Evaluation Methods Used to Build and Assess Language Access Services in Social Service Agencies." It focused on some unique and innovative monitoring tools and assessment practices that are being used to improve existing services and guide agencies which provide services to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals.

The webinar featured three speakers: Laureen Laglagaron, Policy Analyst at the MPI, Senior Policy Advisor Jeanette Moy, and Policy Analyst Kate Pielemeier from the New York City Mayor's Office of Operations Customer Service Group (CSG). Aside from some research findings, the speakers discussed the New York City's Customer Observing and Research Experiences (CORE) initiative. This program uses "secret shoppers" to evaluate the quality of service in more than 40 city agencies across five city districts. For more information about this webinar and other resources, visit http://www.migrationinformation.org/integration/language_portal.

BEST PRACTICES

The bilingual hiring requirement of Hawaii's Language Access law is an element of all language access plans for state agencies. It is included in state plans as a cost effective way for the state to assure language access to state services. If additional personnel are required to provide language services, Hawaii's Language Access law requires hiring "qualified personnel who are bilingual to fill existing, budgeted, vacant public contact positions." HRS § 371-33(d).

The following article from The Race Equity Project, <http://snc.net/equity/category/other/>, addresses a common concern involving the utilization of bilingual staff. Although having employees with multilingual skills is beneficial for agencies and their LEP clients, it is very easy to overload and overuse such staff members. This often leads to employee burnout and other adverse outcomes.

Avoiding Burnout of Bilingual Employees

Agencies (including Legal Aid organizations) have many options when deciding how they will serve LEP clients. One of the most favorable of these options is hiring bilingual staff people. This is preferential because they are on-site during the workday, they understand the agency's policies and procedures, and clients are likely to feel more comfortable if they do not have to speak through an interpreter.



It is easy, however, to take advantage of the convenience of having a bilingual staff person by overusing their services, leading to their burnout. Overuse of bilingual staff by non-bilingual staff for interpretation or translation purposes usually happens very innocently. The non-bilingual staff person may have a quick phone call for which they need an interpreter or a short letter that needs to be translated. While a single request for this type of assistance may not be problematic, the bilingual staff person may be receiving these types of requests from many non-bilingual staff. Taken together, these quick translating/interpreting requests can account for a substantial portion of the bilingual staff person's work time, impairing their ability to fulfill their regular job duties.

With a little planning, it is possible to avoid overusing your bilingual staff. First, job descriptions for bilingual staff must be written specifically enough so that the staff person knows in which situations he or she is expected to translate/interpret for another staff person. Job descriptions for bilingual and non-bilingual staff should be written so that the overall workloads will be comparable, instead of expecting a bilingual staff person to handle the same workload as a non-bilingual colleague while also fulfilling some or all of the agency's language access needs.

Agencies must also develop clear guidelines regarding when it is appropriate to have a bilingual staff person assist in communication with LEP clients and when an outside interpreter or translator should be accessed. After a plan is established, all staff need training on what the guidelines are and how to apply them. This will insure that they only ask a bilingual staff person to translate or interpret when it is acceptable to do so. The process of accessing an outside interpreter should be made as simple as possible to increase the likelihood that non-bilingual staff will follow the guidelines.

By Anne Struby, Staff Attorney, Legal Services of Western Missouri



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MORE PHOTOS FROM THE 2ND ANNUAL HAWAI'I CONFERENCE ON LANGUAGE ACCESS



DATES TO REMEMBER

11/18/09

Language Access Advisory Council Meeting, DLIR Conference Room 320, 9 A.M.- 10:30 A.M.

11/19/09

State Language Access Coordinators' Meeting, DLIR Conference Rooms 310 - 314, 9 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.