



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS**

**FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIA
DENESE MAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CSA
JOSEPH E. DAVIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DHMH/OOE**

**RE: INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING
HOUSEHOLDS**

PROGRAM AFFECTED: ALL PROGRAMS

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY RESEARCH & SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

Some households that apply for assistance through local Departments of Social Services are non-English speaking or have limited English language proficiency. This Action Transmittal reminds local departments to give special communication assistance to these individuals. We want to ensure they receive the same application and eligibility opportunities that are given to all other households.

REQUIRED ACTION

Local departments are required to accept an application for assistance and conduct an interview with non-English speaking or limited English language proficient (LEP) households. When staff cannot conduct an interview because of a customer's limited English language ability, they must use the services of an interpreter. Make sure that all LEP customers are aware, at each service entry point, that they may request an interpreter. Note the person's request for communication assistance in their case narrative.

The local department must provide ready access to community or contract interpreters. Use these resources when in-house interpreter services are not available for a specific language or at a specific time. If the local department uses in-house staff as interpreters, that staff must be competent to provide the

services. The interpreter must be proficient in both English and the other language. If possible, they should have orientation and training that includes the ethics of interpreting and fundamental knowledge (in both languages) of any specialized terms and concepts related to the customer's needs. The administrative office of the courts offers training programs in Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Korean. The local office can arrange for training by calling Linda Etzold at 410-210-1290. The fee for the orientation and training program is \$140.

Local department staff may not ask LEP persons to use family members, especially children or friends as interpreters. A customer's own interpreter should only be used at their request and when using that individual would not compromise the effectiveness of services or violate the LEP person's confidentiality. Note the customers' request to use their own interpreter in the case record. If you are experiencing difficulty in identifying an interpreter, contact the Maryland Office for New Americans (MONA) at 410-767-7514. They will provide a list of individuals who can act as interpreters or offer a referral to organizations that provide these services.

If a local department receives correspondence in a foreign language or needs to have a specific document translated, contact the Foreign Born Information and Referral Network (FIRN) to arrange for services. FIRN charges a fee based on the language and document content. Their telephone number is 410-992-1923. CTS LanguageLink also provides translation (and interpretation services). They can be reached at 410-576-8908 or 1-877-963-7466. Like FIRN, they charge for translation services. In addition, they provide video "voice over" services. Other resources that may be helpful when working with limited English proficiency customers include the Office of Asian Pacific American Affairs at 410-767-7491 or the Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs at 410-767-7857.

CARES PROCEDURES

Enter the code for the language spoken by the LEP customer in the Prim Lang field on the ADDR screen. Place a Y in the Interpreter Needed field. Document the need for an interpreter in the narrative.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions or concerns to Jo-Ann Showalter in the Office of Policy, Research and Systems at 410-767-7956.

cc: DHR Executive Staff
FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
OIM Help Desk
CIS Testing Facility