

Guide to the Indiana Judicial Branch's Local Language Access Plan Template

Introduction

On February 15, 2019, the Indiana Supreme Court's Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC), formerly known as the Advisory Task Force on Language Access in Indiana Courts, delivered the final Language Access Plan (LAP) for the Indiana judicial branch. While the Indiana judiciary is a non-unified court system, the Indiana Supreme Court provides statewide trial rules for local courts and oversees the administrative agencies that undertake various judiciary initiatives across the state, including access to justice and diversity and inclusion. Two key programs responsible for such initiatives, and that operate under the purview of the Indiana Supreme Court, are the LAAC and the Commission on Race and Gender Fairness (RGFC).

To implement statewide language access policy in a manner that is responsive to trial courts' local operational plans, rules, and procedures, the LAAC has developed an LAP template for use by local courts throughout the state to provide guidance for the provision of language access services to limited English proficient (LEP) and deaf and hard of hearing individuals who come into contact with the court system. The template is provided to local courts to use or modify in any way they deem appropriate based on local procedures and resources. Courts may also choose to develop their own LAP and still benefit from the language within the template.

The Indiana Supreme Court recommends that all trial courts throughout the state develop local LAPs to ensure meaningful language access for their court users in a manner that is congruent with each court's local needs, community characteristics, and means. This document serves as guidance for courts using the LAP template.

LAP Template Overview

The local LAP template follows the provisions and policies set forth in the Indiana judicial branch's LAP. The statewide plan provides the legal framework, policies, and procedures for the delivery of high-quality, meaningful language access, and offers the guidance and support needed to comply with the language access policy of the judiciary.

The template includes nine main areas:

1. Legal Basis for the Provision of Language Access Services
2. Needs Assessment, Data Collection, and Early Identification
3. Language Access in Court Proceedings
4. Language Access Outside Court Proceedings
5. Translation
6. Training for Court Staff and Judicial Officers
7. Public Notice, Outreach, and Dissemination
8. Language Access Plan and Services Monitoring
9. Language Access Plan Oversight

When uncertain, courts should look to the Indiana Judiciary's LAP for guidance, as language access services, laws, statutory obligations, and available statewide resources are addressed in length therein. While each of the nine areas enumerated above is covered in depth in the statewide LAP, the LAP template is designed to address local operational plans and guidelines for the delivery of language access services. Each topic sets forth several options for how local courts may provide language access services and allows each court to select those options that reflect their local processes and resources. It also allows each court to add additional information when the template does not address local practices.

Trial courts are encouraged to modify or adapt the template to meet their needs, whether by adding or altering relevant content, and/or by including aspirational goals or addressing future plans in their efforts to ensure meaningful language access to their LEP and deaf and hard of hearing court users. LAAC further recommends that, once finalized and adopted, courts post their plans on their local websites and communicate their plans' existence to the public at large.

Courts should review and update their local LAPs every three years and provide updated LAPs to the Indiana Supreme Court Office of General Counsel.

Questions or Concerns

For questions, concerns, or feedback regarding the LAP template, contact:

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