

**FINDLAY MUNICIPAL COURT
LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN
8-12-2024**

I. LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

This document serves as the Language Access Plan (“LAP”) for Findlay Municipal Court to provide services to limited English proficient (“LEP”) individuals. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Findlay Municipal Court.

II. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

A. Language Access Coordinator

The Findlay Municipal Court designates a Language Access Coordinator to report to the administrative judge. The Language Access Coordinator, along with other court administrators and the Administrative Judge, will assist in ensuring that language services are delivered by the court in accordance with the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, Rules 80–89.

Findlay Municipal Court’s Language Access Coordinator is the Judicial Assistant Supervisor, Brad Bash. He can be reached at ph. 419-424-7144 or email bbash@findlayohio.gov. The Language Access Coordinator also has the following responsibilities:

- Identify interpreters and translators to be included in an interpreter database or list as maintained by the court;
- Track and collect data regarding the use of interpreters, the languages needed, etc.;
- Ensure quality control of interpreters and translators; and
- Assign qualified interpreters, translators and bilingual employees to perform language assistance functions.

B. Interpreters Used in the Courts

Under Ohio law and Supreme Court rules, there are two different instances in which a court must provide an interpreter: in a case or court function (see: Sup.R. 80) and in connection with ancillary services (see: Sup.R. 89). This distinction is important because the type of interpreter to be provided and the court’s responsibilities differ depending on the specific situation.

By statute, Ohio courts must appoint qualified interpreters. Specifically, section 231.14 of the Ohio Revised Code provides that courts shall provide interpreters due to hearing, speech or other impairments of a party or a witness to a case.

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Additionally, pursuant to R.C. 2930.041 (Marsy's Law), the court will provide a Supreme Court certified foreign language interpreter, Supreme Court registered, Supreme Court provisionally qualified, or language-skilled interpreter in all legal proceedings for a limited English proficient victim at no cost to the victim.

Similarly, the court will provide a Supreme Court certified sign language interpreter, a Supreme Court registered sign language interpreter, a Supreme Court Sup.R. 88(E)(3) eligible sign language interpreter, or a certified American Sign Language interpreter from the Registry for Interpreters of the Deaf, in all legal proceedings for a deaf or hard of hearing victim at no cost to the victim.

Additionally, Rule 88 of the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, requires that the Findlay Municipal Court appoint an interpreter in a case or court function when a LEP or deaf or hard-of-hearing individual requests an interpreter or when the court determines the services of an interpreter are necessary for the meaningful participation of the party or witness.

In the Findlay Municipal Court, sign language interpreters will be provided at court expense for all deaf or hard-of-hearing court parties, witnesses, or jurors in compliance with the ADA.

III. USE OF INTERPRETERS

A. Determining the Need for an Interpreter

There are various ways that the Findlay Municipal Court will determine whether an LEP or deaf or hard-of-hearing person needs the services of a court interpreter. First, the LEP or deaf or hard-of-hearing person may request an interpreter.

Second, court personnel and judges may determine that an interpreter is necessary for the meaningful participation of a party or witness if there appears to be lack of understanding during a hearing or interaction. In legal proceedings, judges and magistrates must decide, on the record, whether an interpreter is needed. In court functions and ancillary services, designated staff may decide whether an interpreter is needed.

Third, once a party or a witness has been identified as an LEP or deaf or hard-of-hearing individual, the court will exercise every effort to appoint interpreters in all future related proceedings or court functions. If no in-person interpreter is available at the given instance, the court will grant a continuance or if possible and appropriate, in accordance with Sup.R. 88, Appendix J, use the services of a telephonic interpreter.

B. Appointment of a Court Interpreter

The Findlay Municipal Court will make reasonable efforts to appoint qualified in-person and telephonic court interpreters. If an in-person court interpreter is unavailable the Court will utilize telephonic services or the assistance of a competent interpreter fluent in both English and the language of the court user.

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Pursuant to Sup.R. 88(C), the Findlay Municipal Court will make all reasonable efforts to avoid appointing foreign language interpreters or sign language interpreters if they are compensated by a business owned or controlled by a party or a witness; friend or a family or household member of a party or witness; a potential witness; court personnel employed for a purpose other than interpreting; law enforcement officer or probation department personnel; or would not serve to protect a party's rights or ensure the integrity of the proceedings or have a conflict of interest, real or perceived.

C. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

In accordance with Sup.R. 89, the Findlay Municipal Court shall ensure that LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have meaningful access to ancillary services outside the courtroom. LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may come in contact with court personnel via the phone, counter, or other means. The Findlay Municipal Court has the following resources to assist LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- In order to meet the needs of those who speak less-common languages, court staff may rely on telephonic interpretation or relay services to bridge communication.
- The court also has an office dedicated to language services with a computer or tablet for the use of google translate or word communication.

IV. TRANSLATED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS

Ohio courts understand the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the courts' services.

The Findlay Municipal Court currently has the following forms translated into commonly used languages:

- Rights Waivers translated to Spanish and Haitian Creole
- Probation Rules in Spanish
- Pre-trial rules in Spanish
- Electronic monitoring forms in Spanish
- Indigent waivers in Spanish
- Program referrals in Spanish

The Findlay Municipal Court will assess demographics and analyze the most commonly used forms and embark in the translation of additional forms as resources allow.

V. LOCAL RULE

The Findlay Municipal Court has adopted a local rule (1.24) regarding appointment of interpreters.

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VI. TRAINING

Findlay Municipal Court staff with direct contact with LEP individuals or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing will receive training on language access, to be coordinated by the Language Access Coordinator. The Language Access Coordinator will ensure new staff are trained at the time of hire.

VII. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF LAP

A. LAP Approval

The Findlay Municipal Court LAP has been approved by the Administrative Judge of the court. Any future revisions to the plan will be submitted to the Administrative Judge for approval. Copies of the Findlay Municipal Court LAP will be distributed to all court staff by the Language Access Coordinator.

B. Notification

The Language Access Coordinator will ensure that any new staff receives a copy of the plan. Copies of the Findlay Municipal Court LAP will be provided to the public upon request. In addition, the Findlay Municipal Court will post this plan on its website.

C. Evaluation of the LAP

The Language Access Coordinator will review this plan on an annual basis and make changes based on the review. The evaluation will include review of any complaints received, identification of any problem areas, development of required corrective action strategies, and input from court staff.

VIII. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR AND BACK-UP LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR.

Language Access Coordinator

Name: Brad Bash

Title: Judicial Assistant Supervisor

Address: 318 Dorney Plaza Rm 208

City, State, Zip: Findlay, OH 45840

Phone: 419-424-7144

Email: bbash@findlayohio.gov

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In the event that the Language Access Coordinator is unavailable, the back-up Language Access Coordinator will serve as the substitute.

Back-up Language Access Coordinator

Name: Heather Eigel

Title: Clerk of Court

Address: 318 Dorney Plaza Rm 206

City, State, Zip: Findlay, OH 45840

Phone: 419-424-7805

Email: heigel@findlayohio.gov

XII. LAP ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE APPROVAL

This LAP was reviewed and approved by:

Administrative Judge: Stephanie M. Bishop

Administrative Judge Signature: _____

Date: _____

8/12/2024

XIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

8-12-2024

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