

What Types of Documents Have to Be Translated?

Here are some examples of important documents that must be translated:

- applications, & intake & consent forms;
- eligibility & services notices;
- treatment plans & discharge instructions;
- patient rights & privacy notices;
- appeal & complaint forms; and
- letters that tell you whether you were approved or denied for services.

Exceptions. State and local agencies only have to translate important documents in the most spoken languages of the areas that they provide services to in Maryland. If your language is not very common in the area that the agency serves, they may not have to translate the document for you.

Alternatives. Even if the agency does not have to give you a translation of an important document, you still have the right to understand it. The agency can ask an interpreter to read it to you or give you a translated summary of the document.

The Right to Refuse Language Access

You have the right to refuse any language assistance services you do not want. You also have the right to request language assistance services if you need them later.

Contact Us

If you have been denied an interpreter or translated documents by your healthcare provider or a state agency, please call us at the Public Justice Center for an intake. We will evaluate your situation and let you know your rights and whether we can help you.

PUBLIC **JUSTICE** CENTER 

(410) 625-9409

www.publicjustice.org

This brochure is provided for informational purposes only and does not act as legal advice. This information is not a substitution for a careful review of your individual situation with an attorney.

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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The Right to Free Interpretation & Translation from State & Local Agencies in Maryland

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The Right to Language Access

If you cannot speak, read or write English very well, you have the right to receive information in your own language from certain state and local agencies in Maryland. This is called **language access**.

If the agency receives money or other financial assistance from the federal government, they must provide you with a free qualified (“trained”) interpreter. They also have to translate important documents in your language. They cannot ask you to bring your own interpreter. **You have these rights regardless of your immigration status.**

The interpretation and translation provided to you must:

✓ be free, accurate, and provided in a timely manner;

✓ keep the information you share with the interpreter or translator private; and

✓ protect your ability to make decisions independently.

Rights of Parents & Legal Guardians to Language Access

If you are a parent or legal guardian who has the right to make decisions for your child, you have the right to free language assistance services even if your child speaks English.

Which State & Local Agencies Have to Provide Language Access?

Most state and local agencies must follow Maryland’s language access law. Here are examples of some agencies that must provide free language assistance services:

- Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDA) and its regional offices
- Department of Health (MDH) and local health departments
- Department of Human Services (DHS) and local Departments of Social Services (DSS)
- Department of Labor
- Local Housing Authorities
- Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and local school systems

The Right to an Interpreter

Adults. The agency cannot ask an adult accompanying you to interpret for you unless you ask the adult to interpret AND the adult agrees to interpret. They can also ask if there is an emergency and no trained interpreter is available.

Children. The agency cannot ask a child to interpret for you unless there is an emergency and no trained interpreter is available.

Staff members. The agency can only ask a staff member to interpret for you if they are fluent in English and your language and are trained to interpret.

The Right to Document Translation

Generally, most state and local agencies must translate “important” documents in your language. A document is important if it:

- impacts your rights to benefits or other services;
- requires you to take action or gives you a deadline to respond;
- gives you information about a decision that was made by the agency; or
- misunderstanding it could harm you.