

Language Access @ [Law Firm] – Sample Policy

Mission: Consistent with the [Law Firm Pro Bono Language Access Principles](#), [Law Firm] is committed to providing equal access to Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) individuals seeking or receiving pro bono services. [Law Firm] does not decline clients for pro bono services based solely on language ability. Guidance for attorneys and staff working with LEP and Deaf and HOH clients is set out below. For questions, please contact [pro bono contact points at Law Firm].

Ensure Quality: Attorneys and staff should review [Law Firm]’s Best Practices for Attorneys Working with Interpreters.

Empower Clients: Ask clients if they want an interpreter and explain that it will be free. This question can look like: “In what language do you feel most comfortable telling your story?” E.g. in Spanish: “¿En qué idioma se siente más cómodo/a?” or in French: “Dans quel langage seriez-vous le plus confortable pour nous dire votre vécu?”

Arrange for Interpretation/Translation: The Firm covers costs for interpretation and translation for pro bono clients. Attorneys should not require clients to arrange for their own interpretation or translation, though attorneys should be mindful of the needs and preferences of the client when selecting an interpreter or translator. Attorneys should make every effort to avoid using a client’s family or friends as interpreters or translators.

Attorneys and staff are encouraged to make use of in-house attorneys and staff for interpretation and translation needs. To request in-house staff translation or interpretation, case teams may wish to consult the [Law Firm] Directory available (using the Language search bar within the Other Skills section) to identify potential interpreters or translators, and then contact their local pro bono coordinator to make arrangements.

Attorneys may use internal resources such as [Machine Translation] as a starting point. Please exercise caution and judgement as you would when relying on any machine translation. For translations of documents such as evidence to be filed with a court or agency or written advice to a client, a qualified interpreter or translator must confirm the accuracy of any machine translation. [Machine Translation] user guides are available on [Law Firm’s internal intranet link].

If certification of a translation is required by a court or administrative agency, please contact the pro bono department to ensure that requirements are handled properly.

Where no internal resources are available or qualified to provide assistance, you must contact the pro bono department to arrange for professional language services under the relevant engagement agreement(s).

Using Interpretation Services Provided by Legal Services Organizations: For offices such as the London office that regularly adopt the ‘volunteer model’ for pro bono casework, i.e. in which the supervising charity holds the client engagement, the supervising charity will typically arrange interpretation/translation services through their own preferred vendors and will enter into any

documentation needed directly with the vendors. [Law Firm] will sometimes cover the cost of these interpretation/translation services, but attorneys must first contact their local pro bono coordinator for approval before incurring any such costs. Absent existing agreements with a legal services organization or supervising charity, [Law Firm] should cover language access needs.