



# Language Access Resource Guide

Advancing Equity for Asian American, Native Hawaiian,  
and Pacific Islander (AA and NH/PI) Communities  
in COVID-19 Response Efforts

## Purpose

The purpose of this Language Access Resource Guide is to provide guidance on best practices, strategies, and actions to meet the specific language needs and preferences of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NH/PI) communities in COVID-19 response activities. There is a diverse range of AA and NH/PI languages, and effective communication is essential to meet the needs of all communities and to disseminate accurate information during the COVID-19 response.

This guide is part of a set of resource guides developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH) to provide guidance on best practices to advance cultural competency, language access, and sensitivity toward AAs and NH/PIs in the context of the Federal COVID-19 response, in accordance with the [Presidential Memorandum Condemning and Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Intolerance Against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States](#). For more information on the resource guides, please visit the OMH website at <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov>.

## Audience

This resource guide is designed for government (i.e., Federal, State, and local departments and agencies) and community-based organizations to use in their efforts to support language access for AA and NH/PI communities in COVID-19 response activities.

## How to Use the Guide

Begin by referring to the Roadmap on page 3 that outlines the content of the resource guide, which is divided into sections that describe best practices, strategies and actions for promoting language access. Each section includes examples and resources to assist in the implementation of the best practices, strategies and actions outlined in this guide.

## Legal Framework

It is a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for recipients of Federal financial assistance to fail to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to people whose primary language is not English. In addition, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act requires recipients of Federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to health programs and activities to persons with limited English proficiency. Importantly, "reasonable steps to provide meaningful access" creates obligations regarding applicants for services, family members of those applying for and receiving services, and, depending on the entity, the public at large. Individual entities should bear in mind their responsibilities under the relevant civil rights laws.

# Roadmap

This resource guide is divided into five sections, each of which includes relevant best practices, strategies, and actions; and examples and resources to support implementation.



# 1

## Develop a Language Access Plan

Develop Language Access Plans to ensure COVID-19 response activities meet the needs and preferences of the AA and NH/PI communities disproportionately affected by language access barriers.

# 2

## Identify and Address Language Needs and Preferences



Conduct assessments, examine data and gather input to identify the language needs and preferences of the specific AA and NH/PI populations in your community. Ensure COVID-19 materials and services are culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible.

## Ensure Consideration of Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Language Needs and Preferences

# 3

Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on NH/PI communities, make sure to take into account and address Hawaiian & Pacific Islander language needs and preferences.



## Apply Best Practices for Interpretation and Translation

# 5

## Build Workforce Capacity



Implement general interpretation and translation methods used to ensure language access for individuals with disabilities, limited English proficiency, low literacy, or limited access to or familiarity with telemedicine and other technology, and apply considerations for AA and NH/PI language needs.

# 4



Build and sustain a culturally competent and diverse COVID-19 workforce that can provide effective language services and disseminate information tailored to AA and NH/PI communities.

# 1

## Develop a Language Access Plan



A diverse range of languages and cultures are represented in the AA and NH/PI population. Some languages are spoken and not written, and some individuals have very low literacy even in their own language. Factors like limited English proficiency (LEP), low literacy, disabilities, and lack of culturally competent providers and appropriate services can be barriers to accessing health information and services. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, AA and NH/PIs are disproportionately affected by language access barriers that limit the access to and use of information and services crucial for protecting community health and safety.

An effective language access plan can outline specific strategies and actions to address barriers to information and services. Language access planning that considers the needs of AA and NH/PI communities will mitigate and eliminate barriers through identifying specific language needs within the communities; standardizing interpretation and translation services; offering print, verbal and electronic information in preferred languages; and by strengthening a diverse workforce.

## Strategies and Actions



**Refer to existing federal guidance to inform the development of language access plans.**

### Resources

#### [Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan](#)

This guide from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) identifies ways that providers can assess their programs and develop language access plans to ensure persons with LEP have meaningful access to their programs. The guide includes a list of common sections of a language access plan, which can be considered for inclusion in a language access plan for AA and NH/PI communities.

## [Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI and the Prohibitions Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#)

This guidance from the HHS Office for Civil Rights includes a description of elements of an effective plan on language assistance for LEP persons. These elements could be adapted for a language access plan that addresses the needs of populations beyond those with LEP.

## [Ensuring Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Crisis Communications](#)

This guide from the HHS Office of Minority Health provides strategies for ensuring culturally and linguistically appropriate communication during COVID-19 or other public health emergencies.



**Ensure plans are supported by the necessary internal policies, systems, forms, and budget for proper implementation, management, sustainability, and accountability.**



**Include in the language access plan how information about language assistance services will be shared (e.g., where information about language assistance services will be posted, etc.) and how individuals will be able to access the services being provided.**

## Resource

### [Translated Resources for Covered Entities](#)

The HHS Office for Civil Rights provides translated resources for use, including sample taglines to alert individuals with LEP to the availability of language assistance services. The sample taglines are available in multiple languages.



**Determine staff and community training needs related to development and implementation of the language access plan.**

# 2

## Identify and Address Language Needs and Preferences



Conduct assessments, examine data and gather community input to identify and understand the language needs and preferences of the specific AA and NH/PI populations in your community. Ensure COVID-19 materials and services are culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible.

### Strategies and Actions



**Identify the specific communities for which materials or services are being designed.**



**Conduct a needs assessment to identify preferred languages and other community needs and preferences.**

#### Resource

[Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#)

This document from the U.S. Department of Justice includes guidance on self-assessment and on developing language access directives, plans, and procedures.



**Engage community members as advisors in efforts to determine language needs and preferences.**

## Resource

### [Developing Culturally CAPABLE Materials](#)

This guide from the HHS Office of Minority Health provides an overview of how to use the CAPABLE mnemonic to support the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials. The “Buy-In” component of CAPABLE encourages the engagement of community members for input on materials.



**Collect and monitor data on primary language and social needs through electronic health records, case management tools, and/or other systems.**

## Resource

### [PRAPARE Implementation and Action Toolkit](#)

This toolkit by the National Association of Community Health Centers, Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations, and Oregon Primary Care Association includes an assessment tool to help health centers and providers collect and apply data to better understand their patients' social determinants of health, transform care to meet needs, improve outcomes, and minimize costs. The tool can be used as a model for gathering data on AA and NH/PI needs, including language considerations, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 3

## Ensure Consideration of Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Language Needs and Preferences



Ensure that special considerations are made for Hawaiian and Pacific Islander language needs. The COVID-19 experiences of NH/PI communities differ from those of AA communities. The pandemic has highlighted historical language access disparities and social injustices that have impacted NH/PI communities and their languages.

### Strategies and Actions



**Ask NH/PI communities within the state or local jurisdiction about their preferred languages and about support that is needed to develop in-language resources and provide services.**

#### Resource

[Google Drive Library: AA and NHPI In-Language Resources for Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

This community library is an example of a collection of AA and NH/PI in-language resources on COVID-19. The resource links have been submitted by community members, leaders, and national and community-based organizations that are actively working to improve the health and well-being of AA and NH/PI communities. This project is community-powered and community-driven. *Note: This resource requires requesting access to a Google drive.*



**All COVID-19 materials in Hawai'i should be available in English and Hawaiian, the two official state languages, and in other Asian and Pacific Islander languages and dialects. Do not assume that someone prefers their information in English if they are bi- or multi-lingual.**

## Examples

### [COVID-19 In-Language Resources Website](#)

The Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Hawai'i COVID-19 Response, Recovery & Resilience Team provides in-language COVID-19 information on its website in Hawaiian and Pacific Islander languages.

### [State of Hawai'i Office of Language Access](#)

The Office of Language Access (OLA) provides COVID-19 resources in Hawaiian and Pacific Islander languages on its website. Below (and available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0KfEuJMf4U>) is an example of a COVID-19 video in Marshallese. Subtitles are also available in the video and can be auto-translated into languages other than English.



### [University of Hawai'i COVID-19 Safety Signs](#)

The University of Hawai'i (UH) Mānoa Kawaihuelani Center for Hawaiian Language developed COVID-19 safety signs in Hawai'i's native language to post online and across the 10 UH campuses to promote the health and wellbeing of students, faculty, staff and visitors during the pandemic and to help preserve the state's mother tongue.

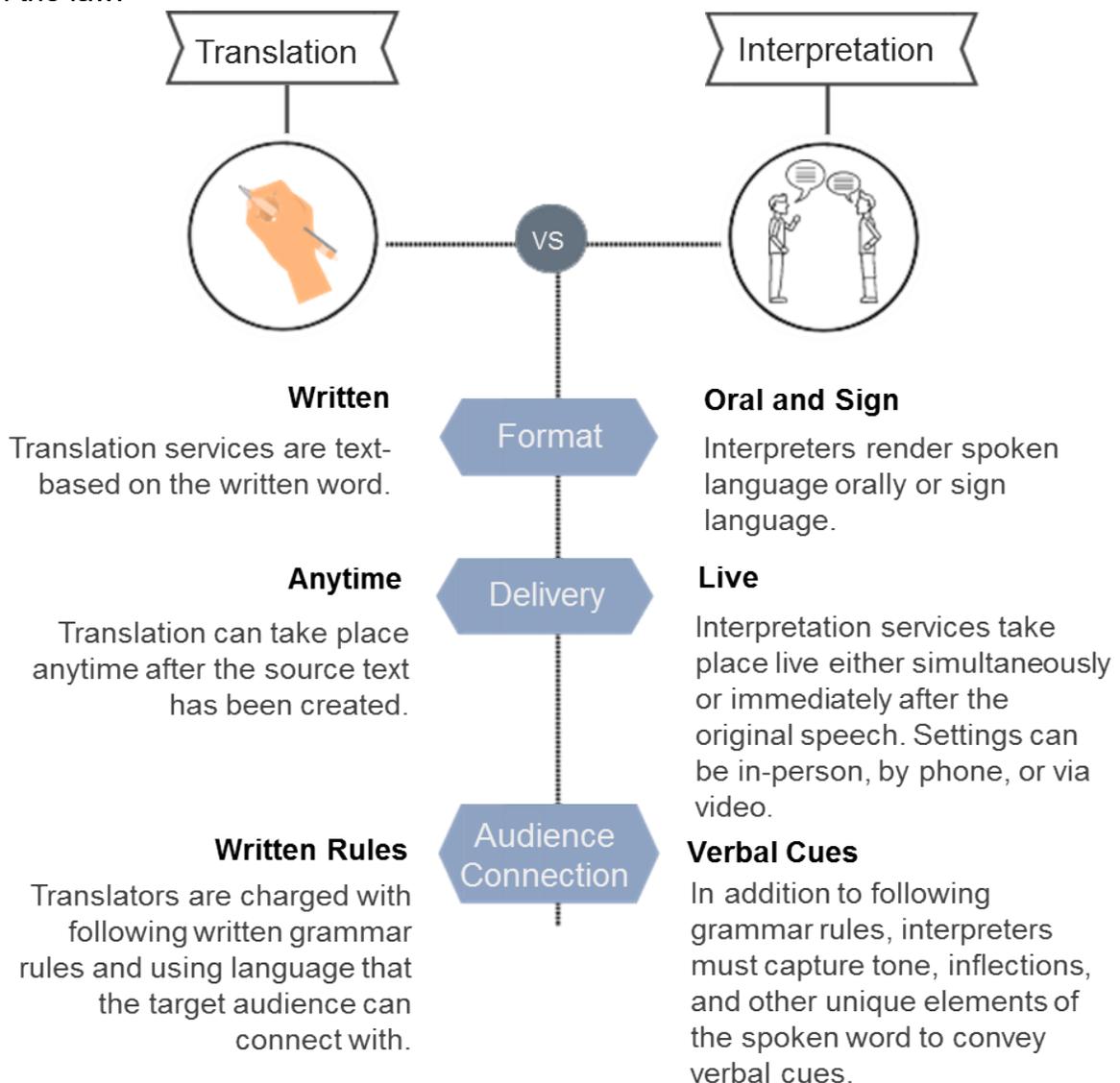


# 4 Apply Best Practices for Interpretation and Translation



Language access services can include translation and interpretation to provide information in an individual’s preferred language. Translation refers to the written word, and interpretation refers to the spoken or signed word. There are distinct and specific skills and training required for each. Implementing best practices for translation and interpretation can help ensure that the information provided is accurate, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and accessible to individuals with disabilities, LEP, low literacy, or limited access to or familiarity with telemedicine and other technology.

Additionally, civil rights laws may mandate specific language access and accessibility steps. Organizations and government entities should be sure to research which laws and regulations apply to them to ensure their programs comply with the law.



The “A Day in the Life of a Translator or Interpreter” video (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUKQiqT7rSw>) provides information about the differences between their work and tips for successful interpreting and translation.



## Strategies and Actions



**Ensure access to quality language assistance services, including for individuals with disabilities, LEP, low literacy, or with limited access to or familiarity with telemedicine and other technology.**

### Resources

#### [Providing Language Services to Diverse Populations: Lessons from the Field](#)

This CMS resource describes approaches and effective practices used by health care organizations to provide language assistance services to persons with LEP.

#### [Section508.gov—Create Accessible Digital Products](#)

The Section508.gov website includes guidance for creating electronic content like documents, presentations, spreadsheets, and PDFs that meet requirements for federally-funded programs and activities related to access to electronic and information technology.

#### [Telehealth.HHS.gov—Improving Access to Telehealth](#)

The Telehealth.HHS.gov website includes suggested methods for providers to ensure equal access to necessary telehealth care, including considerations for people with disabilities or people with LEP.

#### [PlainLanguage.gov](#)

This website provides guidance and resources for writing that is clear, concise and easy to read and understand.



**Translate vital written materials into the preferred languages of the populations served or likely to be served, taking care to ensure information is meaningful, accurate, and appropriate for the intended audience.**

## Resources

### [Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective – Guidelines for Culturally Appropriate Translation](#)

This section of the CMS toolkit includes guidelines for producing culturally appropriate translations, issues to consider, practical advice on the translation process from start to finish.

### [Developing Public-Facing Language Products](#)

This guidance provides detailed information about the best practices implemented at the Census Bureau in development public-facing language products for the 2020 Census, which may be applied to other efforts.

### [King County Written Language Translation Process Manual](#)

This document from King County, Washington outlines effective practices in translation and provides process steps, examples and resources related to the translation of written materials.



**Check translated resources for accuracy before sharing.**

## Resource

### [Quality Control in Translation](#)

The American Translator’s Association provides guidance on ensuring quality control for written translations. The resource outlines a 7-step process that includes a series of questions designed to help beginning translators deliver quality translations.





**Translate COVID-19 information into several languages based on community needs. Use infographics and other easy-to-understand communication methods that are in the preferred languages of the community.**

## Examples

### [TranslateCovid.org "Stop the Spread of COVID-19" Video](#)

TranslateCovid.org is a multilingual resource hub that shares COVID-19 videos collected from a variety of sources, including the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among others. The videos focus on COVID-19 prevention, symptoms, FAQs, and safety. Below (and available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NABGohuFyc>) is an example of a video translated into Hmong on how to stop the spread of COVID-19.



### [Comics for Good](#)

Comics for Good shares comics on COVID-19 information that are translated into multiple languages or that could be used by translators to offer the information in additional languages.





**Create information on websites that is available in multiple languages, inclusive of content and navigation functions.**

## Resource

### [Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital Services for Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) Persons](#)

This resource from the LEP Committee of the Federal Title VI Interagency Working Group includes ideas, resources, and examples to help improve language access to websites and digital services (involving the electronic delivery of information across multiple platforms or devices, such as text, audio, video, mobile applications, and graphics that are transmitted for viewing over the internet).



**Avoid using Google Translate and other machine translation tools. Such tools are unable to evaluate context and frequently produce inaccurate translations.**



**Facilitate the sharing of translated resources within and across communities and states.**

# 5

## Build Workforce Capacity



Meeting the language needs and preferences of AA and NH/PI communities requires building and sustaining a culturally competent and diverse COVID-19 workforce that can provide language services and disseminate information tailored to AA and NH/PI communities.

### Strategies and Actions



**Hire trained, qualified interpreters.**

#### Resource

[What's in A Word? A Guide to Understanding Interpreting and Translation in Health Care](#)

This guide from the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care, American Translators Association, and National Health Law Program explains the distinction between interpreters and translators and provides guidance for hiring interpreters and translators.



**Assess the competency of and provide training for bilingual staff. When possible, develop or use language banks consisting of local experts.**



**Hire and train community health workers to support language access during the COVID-19 response efforts.**

## Resource

### [Promoting Healthy Choices and Community Changes](#)

This e-learning program from the HHS Office of Minority Health, available in English and Spanish, is designed for community health workers and promotores de salud to teach them how to promote individual- and community-level changes toward good health.



**Recruit, promote, and support a culturally and linguistically diverse leadership and workforce that are representative and responsive to the population in the service area.**

## Resource

### [National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care](#)

Developed by the HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH), the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care (National CLAS Standards) provide a blueprint for individuals and health and health care organizations to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services, including standards related to governance, leadership and workforce. OMH's [Think Cultural Health](#) website provides more resources on the National CLAS Standards, including an [implementation checklist](#) and the [Blueprint for Advancing and Sustaining CLAS Policy and Practice](#).



**Provide guidance for providers about how to work with interpreters and how to work with individuals with a different preferred language.**

## Resources

### [Working Effectively with an Interpreter](#)

This checklist from the HHS Office of Minority Health provides guidance for providers on working with interpreters and with patients or clients who need an interpreter.

### [Best Practices for Communicating Through an Interpreter](#)

This guidance from the HHS Office of Refugee Resettlement's Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center outlines best practices for providers for working effectively through an interpreter.



**If organizational capacity to provide language services is limited, partner with community organizations that work with linguistically marginalized communities to conduct outreach and education on services, support enrollment, and provide interpreting and translating services.**



**Implement processes and strategies for the sustainable financing of interpreters, including Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement.**

# Resources

Below is a list of all resources and examples referenced in this guide.

## Develop a Language Access Plan

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2021. *Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan*. Available from: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Language-Access-Plan.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights; 2013. *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI and the Prohibitions Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons*. Available from: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/limited-english-proficiency/guidance-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-title-vi/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health; 2022. *Ensuring Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Crisis Communications*. Available from: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/resource-library/clas-crisis-communication.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights; 2021. *Translated Resources for Covered Entities*. Available from: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/section-1557/translated-resources/index.html>

## Identify and Address Language Needs and Preferences

- U.S. Department of Justice; 2011. *Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs*. Available from: [https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011\\_Language\\_Access\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Planning\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011_Language_Access_Assessment_and_Planning_Tool.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health; 2022. *Developing Culturally CAPABLE Materials*. Available from: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/resource-library/developing-culturally-capable-materials.pdf>
- National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc.; 2021. *PRAPARE Implementation and Action Toolkit*. Available from: <https://prapare.org/prapare-toolkit/>

## Ensure Consideration of Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Language Needs and Preferences

- Google Drive Library: AA and NHPI In-Language Resources for Coronavirus (COVID-19). Available from: <https://wecandothis.hhs.gov/resource/APIAHF-resources>

- The Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Hawai'i COVID-19 Response, Recovery, & Resilience Team. COVID-19 In-Language Resources. Available from: <https://www.nhpicovidhawaii.net/language-resources>
- Hawaii State Department of Health. Office of Language Access COVID-19 Resources. Available from: <https://health.hawaii.gov/ola/>
- Nabarro, M., University of Hawai'i System News; 2020. He Pālua Ka Pahuhopu o Ka haku Pepa Ho'olaha COVID-19. Available from: <https://www.hawaii.edu/news/2020/09/28/hawaiian-language-covid-19-signs/>

### **Apply Best Practices for Interpretation and Translation**

- American Translators Association; 2019. A Day in the Life of a Translator or Interpreter. Available from: <https://youtu.be/MUKQiqT7rSw>
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Providing Language Services to Diverse Populations: Lessons from the Field*. Available from: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/Downloads/Lessons-from-the-Field-508.pdf>
- Section508.gov. Create Accessible Digital Products. Available from: <https://www.section508.gov/create/>
- Telehealth.HHS.gov. Improving Access to Telehealth. Available from: <https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/health-equity-in-telehealth/improving-access-to-telehealth/>
- PlainLanguage.gov. U.S. General Services Administration. Available from: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective – Guidelines for Culturally Appropriate Translation. Available from: <https://www.cms.gov/outreach-and-education/outreach/writtenmaterialtoolkit/downloads/toolkitpart11.pdf>
- U.S. Census Bureau; 2021. Developing Public-Facing Language Products. Available from: <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2020/operations/language-product-handbook.pdf>
- King County, WA. King County Written Language Translation Process Manual. Available from: [https://kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/policies/documents/inf142aao\\_app\\_xb.ashx?la=en](https://kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/policies/documents/inf142aao_app_xb.ashx?la=en)
- Newcomer, TS, American Translators Association; 2021. Quality Control in Translation. Available from: <https://www.atanet.org/resources/quality-control-translation>

- Asian American Studies Center, University of California; 2021. COVID-19 Multilingual Resource Hub. Available from: <https://www.translatecovid.org/>
- Comics for Good. All Translations. Available from: <https://www.comicsforgood.com/translations>
- LEP Committee of the Federal Title VI Interagency Working Group; 2021. *Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital Services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons*. Available from: [https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2021-12/2021\\_12\\_07\\_Website\\_Language\\_Access\\_Guide\\_508.pdf](https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2021-12/2021_12_07_Website_Language_Access_Guide_508.pdf)

### **Build Workforce Capacity**

- National Council on Interpreting in Health Care; 2014. *What's In a Word? A Guide to Understanding Interpreting and Translation in Health Care*. Available from: [https://www.ncihc.org/assets/documents/publications/Whats\\_in\\_a\\_Word\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.ncihc.org/assets/documents/publications/Whats_in_a_Word_Guide.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. *Promoviendo Decisiones Saludables y Cambios en la Comunidad/Promoting Healthy Choices and Community Changes*. Available from: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/education/promotores>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. *National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care*. Available from: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/clas/standards>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. *Working Effectively with an Interpreter*. Available from: <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/resource-library/working-effectively-with-interpreter.pdf>
- Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement. *Best Practices for Communicating Through an Interpreter*. Available from: <https://refugeehealthta.org/access-to-care/language-access/best-practices-communicating-through-an-interpreter/>

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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To find other resource guides and for more information about OMH, visit:  
[minorityhealth.hhs.gov](https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov)

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The HHS Office of Minority Health does not intend, in sharing these resources, to provide legal advice. The sole purpose of the resource list is to provide information that may help users to support language access for AA and NH/PI communities in COVID-19 response efforts. The resources and examples included are not intended to be comprehensive. OMH does not claim to validate the quality of the example translations and in-language resources included in this document or how they will be received by specific communities.

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