



Report on language access needs for abortion services - 2023

Methods

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) oversees the New York City Abortion Access Hub (“the Hub”), which facilitates access to abortion care by referring abortion seekers to a network of abortion providers. The Hub partner network includes all eleven Health + Hospital facilities, private hospital systems, independent providers, telemedicine-only sites and DOHMH sexual health clinics. The Hub currently partners with 27 abortion providers. Since some of these providers have multiple locations, the Hub network is made up of 35 referral sites in total. The Hub has 7 full-time staff members who are all bilingual or multilingual, languages spoken include Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole. The Hub’s promotional materials are in the following languages, including and beyond the 10 designated citywide languages: Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (simplified and traditional), French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Urdu, and Yiddish.

DOHMH created a 12-question survey to evaluate language access services offered by our Hub partners. A Microsoft Forms application was used to create the survey questions; results were downloaded into an Excel document. To make sure the respondents understood the terms used in the survey, a statement at the beginning of the survey was included to explain language access services: both interpretation (spoken, typically person to person conversation) and translation (written, typically for printed or digital materials) services.

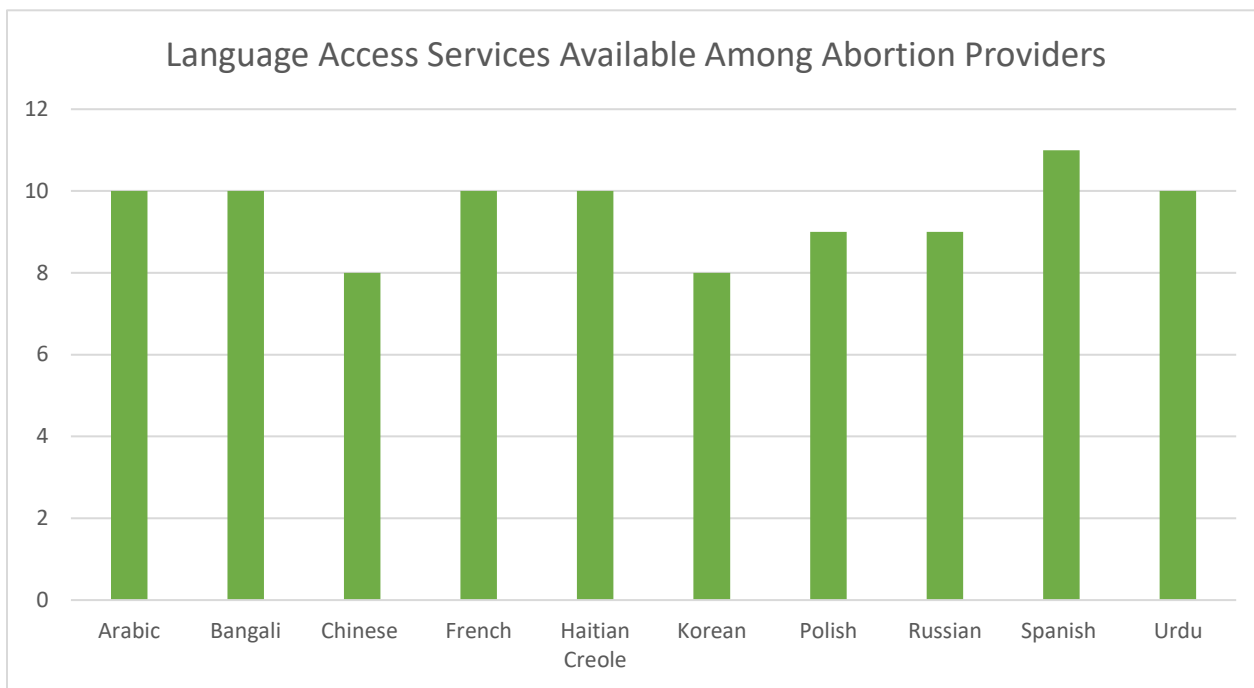
The questions focused on the following topics: (1) type, scope, and methods of language access services available at each provider in connection with providing abortions, (2) whether they received funding for these services, (3) implementation challenges, and (4) recommendations for assisting abortion providers. Most questions offered either lists of response options that allowed respondents to select one or more answers or yes/no response options. Questions that asked about a facility’s name, preferred methods for language services, implementation challenges and recommendations were open-ended questions.

The survey was e-mailed to the Hub’s main contacts, who are primarily Medical Directors and/or Administrative Officers. The body of the email included the definition of language access services and a note that provider affiliations will be kept confidential.

Summary of Findings

A total of 12 providers responded to the survey request, which is a 44% response rate. All these abortion providers have a language access service available at their facility. Most providers have more than one type of language access service available. Of the services available, 48% (10) use professional interpretation services, 5% (1) use a professional translation service, 43% (9), and use ad-hoc interpretation services (for example, bilingual staff members). Most (92%, n=11) providers stated that their preferred methods for providing language access are available at their facility. For most providers (92%, n=11), the preferred method were professional translation services via telephone, video, or text. Several (2) providers prefer ad-hoc in-person interpretation with multilingual staff. Medical interpretation services are available on-demand (83%), scheduled in advance of a visit (8%), in-person (75%), by telephone (83%), and by video conference (50%) for the providers who responded.

Most providers (75% n=9) have language access services in the 10 (Arabic, Bangali, Chinese (simplified or traditional), French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu) designated citywide languages. As shown in the chart below, providers reported which of the 10 designated citywide languages they have available for language access services.



Most providers (83% n=10) responded that they do not have public or private funding for language access services in connection with abortion care. Those reporting they do have such funding reported that it is public funding.

Most (75% n=9) providers have not experienced challenges with implementation of language access services in connection with providing abortion care. The providers who (25% n=3) have experienced challenges have said the following:

- “I once had an interpreter hang up once it became clear that I was counseling on abortion.”
- “I once had a sign interpreter leave once they understood we were completing an abortion.”
- “We had one incident where the patient spoke a rare language and they recognized the interpreter as someone they knew.”
- “Finding a way to communicate with patients on our text-based platform can be challenging.”

Recommendations for Language Access Services based on Findings

Providers were asked for specific recommendations that could support language access services as related to abortion care. Their recommendations were focused on training professional interpreters in nonbiased provision of care as it relates to reproductive health and providing translated printed or digital materials on care following an abortion (medication or procedure). Another recommendation said that more information about contraception and abortion care should be posted publicly and translated into the designated citywide languages.

The City could take action to assist abortion providers with language access services by:

- Publicly post information in the designated citywide languages about accessing reproductive health care services like abortion and birth control.
- Offering medical interpreters or language access service providers in the City a training on reproductive health care and nonbiased provision of care.
- Continuing to support higher education health programs in the recruitment of multi-lingual students and staff.

Any recommendations undertaken by the NYC Health Department would need to be considered holistically in the context of available resources as it relates to the entire universe of available services. Additionally, any recommendations would be done in partnership with the Mayor's Office on Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) as well as any other implicated agencies.

This report will be posted to the following webpage by August 30, 2023: nyc.gov/abortion.