



**New York City Administration for Children's Services
Language Access Plan
Winter 2016 Update**

I. Introduction

In July 2015, ACS issued a [Language Access Plan](#) (2015 Plan) containing the agency's high-level goals and specific outcomes planned for August 2015-July 2016. As described in the 2015 Plan, ACS is focusing on three key areas for improvement: **supporting public-facing staff who work with limited English proficient (LEP) clients; collecting, measuring, and evaluating key data; and enhancing community awareness and engagement.** This document presents a midpoint update on milestones accomplished and ongoing work under the 2015 Plan.

II. Milestones Accomplished

A. Supporting Public-Facing Staff

In order to support staff with the tools, resources, and education needed to effectively bridge language and cultural barriers and enable meaningful, accurate communication between staff and the children, young people, and families we serve, ACS:

- Finalized language services vendor contracts and task orders for fiscal year 2016, with amendments reflecting anticipated increases in demand (July 2015);
- Created a new online Employee Toolkit containing language access resources for public-facing ACS staff (August 2015);
- Identified an agency-wide list of ACS Language Access Point People, who receive and respond to staff inquiries and concerns about ACS language access policies, protocols, and services (August 2015); and
- Issued a message from Commissioner Gladys Carrión, Esq., to all ACS staff, emphasizing the importance of language access, describing key language access protocols, and announcing the new Employee Toolkit and Language Access Point People list (August 2015).

Further, to provide staff with more opportunities to utilize special language skills in their work, ACS:

- Developed a process for recruiting and hiring staff in the Division of Child Protection in relation to language ability, and hired three new staff with Spanish language fluency for Child Protective Specialist positions (November 2015).

B. Collecting, Measuring, and Evaluating Key Data

With the goals of gathering information from key stakeholders about the quality and effectiveness of the ACS language access program, and enhancing the agency's capacity for gathering and evaluating key quantitative data about language access needs and services, ACS:

- Established a new channel for gathering qualitative data from staff, by identifying (as mentioned above) an agency-wide list of ACS Language Access Point People who receive staff inquiries and concerns about ACS language access policies, protocols, and services (August 2015);
- Identified new options for utilizing language services vendor information systems for tracking quantitative data on ACS' usage of contracted interpreters at the neighborhood and program level (December 2015); and
- Within the ACS Division of Preventive Services, identified a process for accessing point-in-time data about language capacity of staff at ACS-contracted preventive services provider agencies (December 2015).

C. Enhancing Community Awareness and Engagement

So that the youth, families, and communities ACS serves are aware of the right to free language services, ACS:

- Posted over 300 larger, more visible signs (notifying the public of the right to language access and the right to contact 311 with language access complaints) in citywide agency locations, including (as of December 2015):
 - all 19 ACS borough office sites, in reception areas and conference rooms used for client meetings by the ACS Division of Child Protection and other programs;
 - entrances to office areas where staff in the ACS Division of Family Permanency interact with members of the public regarding foster care programs;
 - all three Resource Areas within the ACS Division of Early Care and Education, where staff engage with parents/guardians who are applying or recertifying their eligibility for subsidized child care;
 - over 200 ACS-contracted Preventive Services program locations; and
 - meeting rooms and the reception area of the ACS Office of Advocacy;
- Further increased outreach to ethnic media into ongoing promotion of ACS events, initiatives, programs, and services, including (as of December 2015):
 - an outreach event for Chinese community members and media, organized in coordination with Council Member Margaret Chin's office for the purpose of sharing information about ACS processes, programs, and services (interpretation in Mandarin provided by ACS' community partners); and
 - identified need to incorporate bilingual capacity in ACS' communications office and hired a Deputy Press Secretary with Spanish language fluency;

- Launched a redesigned ACS website, incorporating plain language principles and available in multiple languages (November 2015); and
- Identified an agency-wide team, led by the ACS Division of Communications and Community Affairs, to oversee and strengthen the agency’s process for regularly identifying ACS’ essential public documents and verifying that quality translations are available to staff and clients (November 2015).

Furthermore, the ACS Division of Preventive Services, which supports free, confidential, community-based programs designed to keep children safe in the home and prevent them from entering foster care, undertook a multi-faceted education campaign to increase awareness of the right to free language services among Preventive Services staff, provider agencies, and community partners. As of August 2015, the Division of Preventive Services:

- Included information about ACS’ language access policies and services in presentations to external stakeholder groups, including other city agencies and community partners, as well as publications such as *The Link* Preventive Services quarterly magazine; and
- Created an email tagline – ***“Free language interpretation for all families receiving preventive services – It’s their right!”*** – and implemented usage by all staff in the Division.

III. Ongoing Work

Supported by the ACS Commissioner’s Language Access Work Group, which includes representatives from all areas of the agency, ACS continues to work toward the longer-term outcomes set forth in the 2015 Language Access Plan.

In addition, to further the implementation of particular complex, large-scale initiatives set forth in the 2015 Plan, the Language Access Work Group in January 2016 established five subcommittees, which will focus on, respectively:

- Finalizing the updated ACS Language Access Policy;
- Advancing the development and implementation of a multi-stakeholder survey on the quality and effectiveness of ACS’ language access program;
- Continuing to expand community outreach and engagement with regard to ACS’ language access work;
- Further improving coordination of new and existing mechanisms for handling language access inquiries and complaints; and
- Developing and implementing new staff education tools related to language access.

ACS will issue its next Language Access Plan in August 2016.