Greater King County Language Access Plan

1: PROPOSE

This language access plan (LAP) provides a framework for the provision of timely language access services that ensure access for all limited English proficient (LEP), deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind (D/HH/DB) individuals who come in contact with the collaborating courts (listed below) services and programs. Language access services include both interpretation and translation services for LEP and D/HH/DB individuals.

The Greater King County Municipal Courts covered under this LAP include the following: Black Diamond; Bothell; Des Moines; Enumclaw; Federal Way; Issaquah; Kent; Kirkland; Lake Forest Park; Maple Valley; Mercer Island; Renton; SeaTac; and Tukwila.

2: COURT POLICY REGARDING LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

Under Washington state law (chapters 2.42 and 2.43 RCW), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (Safe Streets Act), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the regulations implementing these federal laws, Washington courts are required to provide language access services to all LEP and D/HH/DB individuals in civil and criminal court proceedings and in all court-managed services and programs and to develop a written language access plan pursuant to RCW 2.43.090.

It is the policy of Greater King County Municipal Courts to provide interpreter services at no cost to limited English- proficient (LEP) parties, witnesses, victims, and others with an interest (e.g., parents, legal guardians, custodians) in all court proceedings and operations, both civil and criminal, other than when it is the responsibility of other government bodies pursuant to state law. It is also the policy of this court to provide sign language interpreting services at no cost to persons who are D/HH/DB as required under applicable state and federal statutes and regulations.

The court will provide accessible information to LEP and D/HH/DB persons on how to request these language assistance services and vital documents as part of its notice to the public about its language access services.

Although D/HH/DB individuals are covered under the ADA and chapter 2.42 RCW rather than Title VI and the Safe Streets Act, this plan covers the appointment and provision of interpreters for both D/HH/DB and LEP individuals.

3: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Compilation and Review of Language Data from Reputable Sources

As appropriate, the court will compile or review demographic data regarding the anticipated language needs of its service area. Reputable sources that the court will consult or has consulted include the following:

- The Language Interpretation Needs Dashboard, available through the AOC website 1
- Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program, specifically data from the following year(s): 2023 – 2024
- Information retrieved from our internal stats including interpreter scheduling systems.

This data will be reviewed according to the schedule indicated in Section VII of this plan to help the court analyze its allocation of language access resources and adjust as needed.

Currently, the following spoken or signed languages other than English indicated by reputable sources as likely the most commonly used by persons in the court's service area, in rank order:

1. Spanish
2. Somali
3. Vietnamese
4. Punjabi
5. Russian

3.2 Tracking and Monitoring Language Access Data

In order to help plan for future provision of language access services, and to make the most efficient use of court resources, the court will track the following information for cases involving language access:

- Language
- Case type (e.g. family law, criminal, guardianship, etc.)
- Proceeding (e.g. trial, arraignment, initial appearance, etc.)
- Interpretation Modality (e.g. virtual or in-person) Tools or methods used to track data are as follows:

- Spreadsheet
- Case Management System
- Third-party interpreter scheduling system

4: POINTS OF ACCESS: PROVIDING NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY & IDENTIFYING NEEDS

4.1 Notice of Availability at Points of Access

In order to help facilitate communication with LEP and D/HH/DB court users, the court has identified or will identify procedures to alert court users of available language access services. The court has done this or will do this in the following ways:

4.1.1 Website

As indicated in Section V of this plan and consistent with RCW 2.43.090, the court will make available on its website translated information to inform the public of how to access the court's language access services. The court will provide this information in five or more languages other than English that reputable data demonstrates are the most commonly used in the court's service area.

4.1.2 Telephone

- The court: Has knowledgeable bilingual staff who can provide "in-language" support directly in the language of callers, for some languages other than English.
- Uses telephonic interpretation services, which allows court staff to access interpreters in many languages through a conference call service.

4.1.3 In-Person

- The court has knowledgeable bilingual staff who can help identify court users who need language assistance and can guide them to access those services
- The court uses the multilingual poster with the heading "Your Right to an Interpreter" which includes directions translated into 24 languages other than English, informing the public of the services available.
- The court uses "I-Speak" Cards, which serve as a complement to the multilingual poster, and allow an LEP court user to identify their language.
- The use of interpreter devices like Pocket Talk if available.

As indicated in Section VI of this plan, court staff are provided orientation/training on the availability and use of these materials.

4.2 Point of Access

- The court considers telephonic, online, and in-person interactions as points of access to the court and its services. The physical points of access include:
- Information desk or kiosk
- Front counter
- Security screening at facility entrances
- Clerks' Offices
- Courtrooms
- Court-managed programs and services Coordination with Justice Partners

To ensure the earliest possible identification of the need for language access services, the court has established internal protocols with the various justice partners which routinely interact with this court in order for these partners to communicate to the appropriate court staff the needs of LEP or D/HH/DB participants who will be coming into contact with the court. While justice partners themselves may be under a separate legal obligation to provide language access services to their clients, the court will be notified of any services that fall under the responsibility of the court as early as possible so services may be provided in a timely and efficient manner. Examples of justice partners to be notified include:

- Domestic violence victim's advocate
- Attorney/public defender
- Court facilitator
- Law enforcement
- Probation Departments
- Therapeutic Court Stakeholders

Guiding Principle in Identifying Language Needs: When it appears that an individual has difficulty communicating due to a language barrier, court staff will inform the LEP or D/HH/DB person of his or her right to have language access services provided by the courts at no cost to them, even if the LEP or D/HH/DB person has not made a request for the language access services.

5: LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

A designated person or office is indicated as the central point of contact for language access services. These consist primarily of interpretation and translation services. In some cases,

services can be provided directly in a language other than English, generally through communication with bilingual court personnel. Interpretation can be provided in spoken languages or in sign languages. These services are provided, as appropriate, for situations within the courtroom setting and outside of the courtroom setting, as indicated below. The provision of these language access services is realized through the appointment of interpreters in ways consistent with best practices in the field of court interpretation and with existing federal and state policies. These practices help assure that steps are taken to appoint appropriately credentialed or vetted interpreters, to do so in as efficient a manner as possible, and in ways that consider the availability of interpreters.

5.1 Designated Language Access Contact

The court has designated (see the attached list) to oversee the coordination of language access services and to manage requests for interpreters and other language access services. This designated person or office oversees the following:

- Developing lists of interpreters and securing interpreter services
- Receiving and tracking language assistance requests
- Addressing gaps in interpreter services by conducting outreach as needed
- Providing information to assist LEP and D/HH/DB individuals to secure language access services
- Assisting or providing referrals to attorneys, justice partners, and other relevant persons to secure language access services for their clients and constituents
- Assisting court staff with securing language access services
- Answering questions from LEP and D/HH/DB individuals, and the public at large, regarding the court's available language access services

LEP and D/HH/DB individuals, attorneys, justice partners, government agencies, and any other entities in need of language access services for court programs or activities or to acquire such services or information for themselves or their clients, may contact individual courts listed at the end of this document.

5.2 Appointment of Interpreters for In-Court Proceedings

When a determination has been made that a court user requires the services of an interpreter, court personnel will follow the following guidelines when meeting the need for an interpreter.

5.2.1 Credentialed Interpreters

This court appoints court-credentialed spoken language or court-credentialed sign language interpreters whenever such persons are available. To secure appropriate interpretation, the court uses the following:

- Staff interpreters
- Independent contractor interpreters, using AOC's registry of credentialed spoken language interpreters
- Independent contractors sign language interpreters, using DSHS' Office of The Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) website
- Interpreter Agencies

5.2.2 Non-Credentialed Interpreters

When credentialed interpreters are not available, or for languages for which interpreters are not credentialed, the court takes steps to locate those interpreters who might still be able to provide acceptable services.

With a finding of good cause, the court may appoint a non-credentialed interpreter, first deciding that the interpreter is able to interpret accurately all communications to and from LEP or D/HH/DB persons in that particular proceeding.

Good cause is found when:

- Given the totality of the circumstances, including the nature of the proceeding and the potential penalty or consequences involved, the services of an in-person credentialed interpreter are not reasonably available to the appointing authority; or
- The current list of credentialed interpreters maintained by the Administrative Office of the Courts does not include an interpreter in the language spoken by the LEP.

Consistent with policy, once good cause is established on the record, the court will take steps to help assure the proposed interpreter has the ability to interpret accurately. The appointing authority shall satisfy itself on the record that the proposed interpreter:

- Is capable of communicating effectively with the court or agency and the person for whom the interpreter would interpret; and
- Has read, understands, and will abide by the code of ethics for language interpreters established by court rules, as established in GR 11.2

The court will follow standard practices for determining the proposed non-credentialed interpreter's ability to interpret accurately, referring as needed to Page 3 of the Bench Card for Spoken Language Courtroom Interpreting 2, last updated by the Interpreter Commission in July, 2025. In the case of signed language interpreters, the court will refer as needed to the Bench Card for Hearings with Sign Language Interpreters, last updated in 2021.3

Guiding Principle: The court will not appoint as interpreters those persons determined to have a potential conflict of interest in the proceeding or those determined to not have the ability to interpreter accurately, including the following: minors; friends and family of the LEP or D/HH/DB person; advocates and attorneys; justice partner bilingual staff; or anyone deemed unqualified after colloquy by the court.

5.3 Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The court is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP and D/HH/DB persons impaired have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. It is the practice of the court to provide interpreters for court-managed services, programs and operations consistent with state and federal language access mandates. In compliance with such mandates, the court shall provide language access services at:

- Anger management class
- Cashiers
- Criminal diversion programs
- Electronic home monitoring
- Information counters
- Intake or filing offices
- Probation offices
- Court resource rooms/care closets

5.4 The Provision of Interpretation Services

The court has adopted practices, procedures, and systems for the provision of interpretation services, including the use of appropriate modalities of interpreting, accounting for longer interpreted sessions, and calendaring/scheduling. Regardless of the modality used to provide interpretation court proceedings, the court will provide interpreter consist with RCW 2.43 and the processes outline in section "Appointment of Interpreters for Court Proceedings."

5.4.1 Interpreting Modality

In-person Interpretation; Video Remote Interpretation (VRI); Telephonic Interpretation

5.4.1.1 In-Person Interpretation

The court uses in-person interpreters as indicated: The court uses in-person interpreters whenever possible, and uses Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) as an alternative as needed.

5.4.1.2 Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)

When the court makes use of the modality of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI), it does so in a manner consistent with GR 11.3 and in a manner that meets requirements for providing effective communication, including:

- Real-time, full-motion video and audio;
- A clear, large image;
- A clear transmission of voices;
- Adequate training of staff in utilizing the equipment; and
- Use of Credentialed and Non-credentialed interpreters
- While providing appropriate VRI services is a viable means of meeting language access needs, doing so successfully requires dedicated equipment and familiarity with processes. The court uses VRI in ways consistent with these requirements in order to assure appropriate access.
- The court has established procedures, has secured the requisite equipment, and has court staff with training on providing VRI. The court uses VRI as a regular component of providing interpreter services.

5.4.1.3 Telephonic Interpretation

The court makes use of telephonic interpretation for interactions with persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) that are relatively short in nature and generally not of a legal nature. These interactions typically take place at points of contact such as court clerk's office, cashier's office, front counter, and other such places. The court has the following arrangement for telephonic interpretation services:

- Contract or agreement with a telephonic service provider
- Bilingual court staff who can provide basic information by telephone

5.4.2 Team Interpreting

The court will take into account the anticipated length of interpreted proceedings to determine appropriate interpreter scheduling. Such consideration is generally applicable in longer hearings. The assignment of multiple interpreters is a quality assurance provision to help ensure accuracy. Consistent with GR 11.4, the court will assign interpreters as indicated below:

Spoken language	**Signed Language**	**Assign**
More than 1 hr. Simultaneous	More than 1 hr.	2 interpreters
More than 2 hr. Consecutive	n/a	2 interpreters
When a team of interpreters is not readily available and good cause is found on the record to proceed with one interpreter, the interpreter is to be provided a 10-minute break after every 20 minutes of interpreting.		

5.4.3 Calendaring and Scheduling of Interpreters

In order to schedule interpreters in a manner that serves the needs of LEP and D/HH/DB court users while doing so as efficiently and effectively as possible, the court has adopted or will adopt the following practices:

- Contracting with agency or independent interpreters, during which the interpreters are available for a range of interpretation needs
- Maximizing the contracted time of interpreters so that when an interpreter is not occupied in a courtroom proceeding, he or she may be assigned to assist in other court-managed services, such as clerk's offices, pro se clinics, Courthouse Facilitator meetings, or others

5.4.4 Additional Considerations in the Appointment and Use of Interpreters

In appointing interpreters, court staff will ensure that the interpreter and the LEP or D/HH/DB participant can effectively communicate. It is also the practice of the court to:

- Only allow an LEP or D/HH/DB person to waive his or her right to the assistance of an interpreter if the waiver is known, voluntary, and on the record. The waiver of an interpreter may be rejected by the court or later revoked by the person.
- Require interpreters to provide sight translations for documents related to the court proceedings.
- Prohibit interpreters from assisting LEP or D/HH/DB with entering information on court forms without the involvement of court staff or their attorney in the completion of such forms.
- Provide sign language interpreters for jurors who are D/HH/DB when such persons are called and selected for jury service
- As noted in the policy interpretation section earlier, chapter 2.42 RCW requires that courts provide interpreters for persons who are D/HH/DB when they are required to attend court ordered programs or services.
- In addition to the provision of qualified interpreters in all proceedings where required, court's bilingual staff may assist with language needs outside of court proceedings. Bilingual staff shall be trained to understand their role, how it differs from the role of an interpreter, and that staff are only used for basic communications.

5.5 Translated Forms and Documents

5.5.1 State Translated Content

In order to help facilitate communication between the court and LEP and D/HH/DB individuals, and to facilitate the disposition of cases, the court will take steps to evaluate the need for translated materials and to provide those materials. The court refers to the court forms translated into the following languages, and available on the AOC website4, and makes these forms available as appropriate:

- Korean
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Tagalog
- Chinese (Simplified)

In addition to these court forms, a number of guides or introductions to courts and court processes are available in Spanish, covering these topics:

- A guide to the court system
- Informational one- and two-pagers on self-representation in Municipal, District, and Superior Courts and an introduction to Small Claims Courts

5.5.2 Website Notice

Consistent with changes in 2025 to RCW 2.43, the court will take steps to make available on its website translated information that informs the public of procedures necessary to access a court's language access services and programs. The information shall be provided in five or more languages other than English that reputable data indicates are predominate in the court's jurisdiction. In order to achieve this, the court will consider adopting such notice when provided by the AOC or will prepare its own statement and secure translation.

5.5.3 Translation Alternatives

In the absence of written translations of documents in languages other than English, the court will provide alternative forms of access to the content of important English-language written content, such as providing a sight translation. "Sight translation" refers to rendering written content in one language orally into another language. Washington court-certified interpreters are judged competent in providing accurate sight translation.

5.5.4 Translated Content

The court has translated content based on language needs. The items translated are listed in an appendix or are available through the court's website.

Sight-translation on the record should be limited and will not be used as a replacement of written translations of documents offered in an evidentiary hearing.

5.6 Providing Emergency Information to LEP Court Customers

The court takes reasonable steps to ensure that LEP and D/HH/DB individuals have meaningful access to emergency information should an emergency situation arise. The court provides such information in the following ways:

- There are universally understood emergency signs located in the strategic places throughout the courthouse building;
- Emergency exits are clearly marked [possibly also in the most common non-English language(s) used in the area].
- Bilingual staff is informed and trained to provide emergency information.

6: TRAINING

In order to continue to integrate the provision of language access services into the commonplace operations of the court, and to sustain those services in a viable and robust manner, the court will provide staff training based on the content in this Language Access Plan.

6.1 Training Topics

Key areas of focus are the following:

- Initial general language access training and orientation for new staff employees as part of their initial training.
- Identifying language access needs at points of access
- Providing notice in accessible manners about the availability of language access services and how to request or access those services
- Proper appointment and scheduling of interpreters for all court proceedings and court-managed programs and services
- How to qualify a non-credentialed court interpreter – pertains to judges only
- Role of an interpreter, modes of interpreting, and interpreter ethics and professional standards
- Courtroom management when interpreters are used
- Use of remote technologies for interpreting
- Cultural competence

6.2 Means of Providing Training

In order to best meet these training and orientation needs, the court has adopted or will adopt a targeted approach, and the court's judicial officers and staff will have access to the following training opportunities, as appropriate.

Instructional Format	**Item/Topic/Session**	**Audience, as applicable**
Live or recorded in-person or remote sessions	• Judicial Conferences with language access presentations • Judicial College (new judicial officers) • 2025 AOC Language Access Webinar Series sessions • Institute for New Court Employees	• New Judicial Officers or those new to WA • Court Administrators • Court Clerks • Interpreter Coordinators

	• National Training provided by NCSC and other nationwide judicial branch agencies	
Instructional Modules	• Language Access Basic Training (LABT) modules	• New employees • New to point-of-access role (front counter, etc.)
Written Content	• RCW changes, 2025 2-Pager • Bench Card for Spoken Language and Sign Language Interpreters	• Court Administrators • Judicial Officers

7: PUBLIC NOTIFICATION, STEPS FOR MONITORING & REVIEW OF PLAN

7.1 Public Notification

Consistent with RCW 2.43, this LAP is a publicly available document. Members of the public may access a copy of this plan by:

- Accessing it on the participating court's website
- Requesting a copy, which can be provided in digital or written form, at the court's discretion

7.2 Filing a Complaint

LEP and D/HH/DB individuals have an option to file a complaint with the local court using local court customer complaint filing procedures. The local court complaint rules/processes are as follows: See each local court's complaint form/court contact on each individual court's website.

7.3 Disseminating the LAP

In an effort to further disseminate knowledge about this plan, the court will provide notification of its update in the following manners:

- Collaborate with justice partners, local branches of government and other relevant organizations to ensure distribution of information.
- Translating vital outreach materials into frequently used languages other than English.

- Establishing mechanisms for obtaining feedback from the public, attorneys and justice partners regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the administrative protocol and take this feedback into account at the yearly evaluation of the protocol.

7.4 Periodic Evaluation of the LAP

The court will review this LAP to determine updates and revisions that might be needed, according to the following schedule:

- In preparation for the biennial requirement to submit an updated plan to AOC by Jan 1 of every even-numbered calendar year.
- This periodic evaluation will include an analysis of the number of interpreter requests by language, including signed language, comparing that usage to anticipated usage for the region served by the court based on reputable data sources indicated in Section III of this plan. This analysis will serve to achieve the following: Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided
- Assessment of whether staff members have received adequate support and training, and determining other appropriate supports
- Identification of challenges or trends the court is experiencing with providing language access services.
- Increased fiscal impact for providing such services.

Consistent with RCW 2.43, the court will submit its next current Language Access Plan to the AOC by January 1, 2028.

7.5 Areas of Focus for Continued Improvements to Language Access

As a living document, this LAP will be updated to reflect changes in the provision of services. These changes can reflect the demographics of the court's service area, changes in the availability of interpreters, or efforts to bolster the provision of language access services. Areas of focus for the court include the following:

- Better identifying forms to prioritize for translation consideration based on LEP customer usage.
- Referring to the statewide translations of court forms available on the AOC website, and making use of those forms whenever possible
- Consideration of the technical and infrastructure requirements to provide remote interpretation, as a possible means to avoid delays while providing language access
- Availability of credentialed and non-credentialed interpreters
- Continued exploration of AI for interpreter services

7.6 Court Review and Approval

This Plan has been reviewed and authorized by the following designee(s) at their respective courts and is approved to be submitted to the AOC, as indicated in RCW 2.43.090.

Court and Contact Information
Black Diamond - Tawnya Parks tparks@blackdiamondwa.gov 360-851-4490 https://www.blackdiamondwa.gov/municipal-court
Bothell – Courtney White courtney.white@bothellwa.gov 425-487-5587 https://www.bothellwa.gov/187/Municipal-Court
Des Moines- Melissa Patrick mpatrick@desmoineswa.gov 206-878-4597 https://www.desmoineswa.gov/your_government/municipal_court
Enumclaw – Shelly Undlin sundlin@ci.enumclaw.wa.us 360-825-7771 https://www.cityofenumclaw.net/182/Court
Federal Way – Tiziana Giazzi tiziana.giazzi@federalwaywa.gov 253-835-3000 https://www.federalwaywa.gov/page/municipal-court
Issaquah – Nikki Meister nikkim@issaquahwa.gov 425-837-3170 https://www.issaquahwa.gov/303/Municipal-Court
Kent/Maple Valley – Candace Enders cenders@kentwa.gov 253-856-5730 https://www.kentwa.gov/departments/municipal-court
Kirkland – Erin Wheeler ewheeler@kirklandwa.gov 425-587-3160 https://www.kirklandwa.gov/Government/Departments/Municipal-Court
Lake Forest Park – Julie Espinoza jespinoza@cityoflfp.gov 206-364-7711 https://www.cityoflfp.gov/147/Municipal-Court

Mercer Island – Cheryl Lucero cheryl.lucero@mercerisland.gov 206-275-7604 https://www.mercerisland.gov/municipalcourt
Renton – Yanna Filippidis yfilippidis@rentonwa.gov 425-430-6550 https://www.rentonwa.gov/City-Services/Municipal-Court
SeaTac – Gail Cannon gcannon@seatacwa.gov 206-973-4610 https://www.seatacwa.gov/government/municipal-court
Tukwila – LaTricia Kinlow Trish.Kinlow@Tukwilawa.gov 206-433-1840 https://www.tukwilawa.gov/departments/municipal-court/