

Working for Language Justice in Washington and Beyond

Joana Ramos, MSW
Co-Chair, WASCLA Board of Directors
March 4, 2025



WASCLA
Washington State Coalition for Language Access

Who We Are

- ▶ WASCLA is a 501(c)3 education and advocacy organization whose mission is to eliminate communication barriers that prevent Washington residents whose primary language is not English from accessing essential services.
- ▶ We promote equity in communication in spoken, written, and signed languages through policy work on language access rights and responsibilities and creation of language services that meet community needs, in collaboration with members of our coalition network.

Communication, Convenings, Training and Consultations

Communication

- 6 LANGUAGE ACCESS UPDATE CALLS
- 6 NEWSLETTERS
- BLOG POSTS
- COMMUNITY CONVERSATION SERIES

“CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS FOR THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER SHORTAGE IN WASHINGTON” - JAN. 2024

Training

- LANGUAGE ACCESS IN WASHINGTON HEALTHCARE SERVICES
- ORIENTATION FOR SCHOOL LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATORS
- PUBLICATIONS

Consultations

- WITH GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS; NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS; LEGAL ORGANIZATIONS; PROFESSIONAL GROUPS; ADVOCATES; RESEARCHERS

Since 2014, Informing the Public about Language Access Rights



Know Your Rights Flyer

In 30 written languages

ISpeak Cards

For 31 spoken languages

I speak Spanish and need the help of an interpreter to talk with you.

Hablo español y necesito la ayuda de un intérprete para comunicarme con usted.

Washington State ~~Front~~ Coalition for Language Access
www.wascla.org

You can get an interpreter at no cost to talk to the doctor and staff at hospitals, clinics, and medical offices.

An interpreter speaks English and [name of language] fluently and is trained in medical words to make sure that you and your doctor get the right information.

Back

ISpeak cards cards: <https://apps.wascla.org/search/?q=ISpeak>

KYR flyers: <https://apps.wascla.org/search/?q=Know+Your+Rights>

Selected Advocacy Highlights

- ▶ Language access 101 training
- ▶ Multilingual customer services for ACA implementation (WA Healthplanfinder)
- ▶ Mandate for WA emergency communications to meet local language needs
- ▶ Drafting Language Access Plan for WA COVID Emergency Response
- ▶ Seeking solutions to address shortages of spoken and signed language interpreters
 - ▶ impacts of termination of DSHS medical interpreter testing
 - ▶ no training for ASL interpreters to qualify for mandatory national credentials

WASCLA BLOG: AN OFFICE OF LANGUAGE ACCESS FOR WASHINGTON

<https://wascla.org/is-now-the-time-for-washington-to-have-a-statewide-office-for-language-access/>



Is now the time for Washington to have a Statewide Office for Language Access?

In an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, language barriers can present significant obstacles, hindering access to vital services and information for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and for those who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH/DB). Recognizing this challenge, states may opt to establish a centralized office of language access to streamline and coordinate language access services across government agencies to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in service delivery.

State and local governments receiving federal financial assistance are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and services by persons with limited English proficiency and, regardless of funding sources, state and local governments are required to ensure effective communication for persons who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or Deafblind. Planning to provide language access services – including interpretation and translation – is critical to providing meaningful access and effective communication to programs and services for all Washingtonians, regardless of the language they communicate in. Creating a language access plan to direct the agency's language services is the first step in that process.

In addition to language access plans, having a language access program is critical to implementing robust language services at the agency level. Increasingly, over the past decade, state and local governments have created or increased their language access programs. As state

Language Justice in 2025

???

Connect and Collaborate with Us

Follow the link on our Contact page to sign up for mailing list to receive meeting notices and news at
<https://www.wascla.org/contact>

Find us on LinkedIn: **<https://www.linkedin.com/company/wascla/>**

Have a question, announcement or something you'd like to work on?
Email us: **info@wascla.org**