

# FORTY-NINTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF MICHIGAN

COUNTIES OF MECOSTA AND OSCEOLA



Honorable Scott Hill-Kennedy  
Chief Circuit Judge

Honorable Ronald C. Nichols  
Circuit Judge

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Mecosta and Osceola Counties  
C49 Local Administrative Order 2013 - 033  
D77 Local Administrative Order 2013 - 043  
PD18 Local Administrative Order 2013 - 023

## LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

In accordance with Supreme Court Administrative Order 2013-8, the court establishes this Language Access Plan (LAP) to provide for the language access needs of court users.

This LAP is the plan for the court to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). A limited English proficient person is a person who does not speak English as his or her primary language, and who has limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English, and by reason of his or her limitations, is not able to understand and meaningfully participate in the court process.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and effective language assistance to LEP persons who came in contact with the court.

The court has appointed a language access coordinator to be a contact person for the public, court staff, and SCAO concerning this plan and its implementation. The language access coordinator may be contacted through the court administrator's office.

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### **IT IS ORDERED:**

#### **Section I. Needs Assessment**

##### **A. Census Data**

The court will make every effort to provide service to all LEP persons in the court's service area. The following list shows the non-English languages most frequently spoken in the court's physical jurisdiction

1. Spanish
2. German
3. Arabic

##### **B. Court Experience**

Based on court usage, the following lists shows other non-English languages spoken in the court not reflected in the US Census data.

1. Languages spoken by international students and guests attending Ferris State University.

**C. Identification of LEP Persons**

Court staff use the following methods to identify LEP persons:

- “I speak” cards at clerk’s counters
- In-person and telephone requests from friends/family members of LEP persons seeking assistance for upcoming court matters.

**Section II. Language Assistance Resources**

**A. Interpreters Used in the Courtroom**

The court will offer assistance to LEP Persons in the courtroom by providing foreign language interpreters as required by Michigan Court Rule 1.111.

**B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom**

The court will take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. This is one of the most challenging situations facing court staff, because in most situations they will encounter LEP persons without an interpreter present. LEP persons may come in contact with court personnel via:

- Circuit, District, Probate and Family Court Clerk’s Offices
- District Court Probation: reporting days with probationers, drug-alcohol screens, community service referrals.
- Juvenile Court Probation: consent calendar meetings
- Friend of the Court: custody-parenting time interviews, support enforcement conferences, mediation.

Court staff will consult with the court’s language access coordinator to determine what type of language service should be made available, based on the nature and importance of the court service to be provided and resources available. The following language services are available:

- “I Speak” cards at clerk’s counters
- Telephonic interpreter services: ie., Language Line
- In-person interpreters

**C. Service Referrals**

The court will make reasonable efforts to ensure that a non-federally funded entity to which the court refers LEP persons for services has provisions for addressing their needs. The court will consider viable alternatives if language access is not provided by such a non-federally funded entity.

**D. Forms & Documents**

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) makes select translated forms available to the courts at <http://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/Forms/Pages/default.aspx>.

When in person interpreters are hired for court proceedings, they are expected to provide sight interpretation of documents for LEP persons.

1. Courthouse translation for LEP

- The Mecosta County courts have no frequently encountered languages. “I Speak” cards are available. Requests for language assistance is rare.
- When persons present themselves needing assistance with forms, court staff will first check the SCAO website to determine if the form is printed in the requested language, and print it for the consumer.
- If forms are not available in needed language, court staff will offer assistance through Language Line for immediate translation. Conference rooms with telephone lines will be offered for this purpose.

**Section III. Training**

The court is committed to training its judges and court staff, and coordinating with county clerks on providing LEP persons with meaningful access to court services. When the court provides training sessions, it will include a component addressing LEP policy and procedure and the court’s LAP. The court is aware that staff members having contact with the public are more likely to need in-depth training on LEP policy and procedure.

The court will work with SCAO and MJI to ensure that all employees are trained on LEP policy and procedure. Training will be offered to assist judges and staff to: identify and respond to LEP persons, increase awareness of the types of language services available, guide when and how to access those services, and effectively use language services.

Staff will be told to contact the language access coordinator, or his or her back-up for when the coordinator is out of the office.

**Section IV. Public Notification and Evaluations of Language Access Plan**

**A. Language Access Plan Approval and Notification**

The court’s LAP has been approved by the State Court Administrative Office. The court will post its LAP on its public website or public notification area within the courthouse and will make copies of the LAP available upon request.

The court consulted with the following members of the community in creating its LAP:

- Ferris State University, Office of International Education
- Spectrum Health Big Rapids

**B. Evaluation and Review of the LAP**

At the direction of SCAO, or on its own initiative, the court will assess weather the LAP needs updating. The LAP will remain in effect unless modified or updated. Review of the following areas may indicate a need to update the LAP

- Number of LEP persons requesting court interpreters or language assistance
- Funding or provided or available for language services
- Current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided
- Feedback from LEP communities within the county.
- Court staff (turnover, new hires, etc.)
- Feedback from trainings provided by the court or SCAO/MJI
- Viability of identified language services and resources
- Problem areas and corrective action strategies
- Updated census data

Then language access coordinator for this court ensures this plan is followed, advises the court on potential updates to this plan, and coordinates the language access needs for the court as they arise. The court has issued an addendum to this order identifying the name and contact information of the language access coordinator. The court will update that addendum any time the language access coordinator changes.

12/04/13  
Date

Scott Hill-Kennedy  
Chief Judge, Hon. Scott Hill-Kennedy (P41542)

12-05-13  
Date

Ronald C. Nichols  
Hon. Ronald C. Nichols (P35639)

12/6/13  
Date

Susan H. Grant  
Hon. Susan H. Grant (P33079)

12-5-13  
Date

Marco S. Menezes  
Hon. Marco S. Menezes (P43539)