

Language Access Work Group (LAWBG) - Meeting Notes

February 16, 2017

Meeting Location: Lifeworks (835 N. Pleasant Valley Rd), East Multi-Purpose Room

Update on Actions Relating to City of Austin Language Access Audits

Gena McKinley of the City of Austin's Communications and Public Relations office provided an update on the City's efforts to enhance language access services. She informed the group of the actions being taken by specific City departments and also gave a status report on the procurement process for interpretation and translation services. Gena also informed the group that the City was interested in adopting an iSpeak card process and asked the group for input on how to best establish a common iSpeak card program to serve the needs of Austin/Travis County. A committee will be formed to discuss options and make a recommendation.

Discussion of Online Tools & Other Resources

Raul Alvarez, CAN's Executive Director, presented a concept for a website that might be developed to serve as a language access hub for Greater Austin. The language hub could provide access to a common language identification card system but also provide information on how to obtain language assistance when reaching out to 911, 311 and 211 and when attempting to access public services from the City, County, school systems, health providers, etc. This idea will be included as a recommendation in the report of the LAWG.

Alvarez also presented a copy of the national standards developed by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care. The group reviewed these standards and discussed the possibility of them using these standards as a way of creating training program for program/government staff who routinely serve as interpreters but may not be certified interpreters. Esther Diaz mentioned that there was a similar set of standards for court interpreters and that the two sets of standards would be helpful in terms of crafting a training program for the program/government staff that are not certified interpreters.

Finally, Alvarez presented an excerpt from the City of Austin's "Welcoming City Initiative" Final Report that called for expanded language and multi-lingual access. He asked for the group to share other excerpts from other reports that may make mention

of the need to improve the systems that are currently in place to address community language needs.

Presentation of Adult ESL Programs by Meg Poag of the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas

Meg Poag provided an overview of the Adult ESL programs that are provided in the Central Texas area. The coalition strives to meet Adult ESL needs by embedding high-quality, proven programming in the business, healthcare and nonprofit sectors for the purpose of deepening the impact of local nonprofits, strengthening the business workforce, and building stronger communities.

Poag provided a detailed overview of their English @ Work Curriculum that they have been using to provide ESL training in the work place. The curriculum can be customized to the workplace and to students' job descriptions. Business partners report increased employee retention, reduced accidents and improved customer service as a result of our English classes. Students report increased sense of confidence at work, promotions and a desire to continue their education. The Literacy Coalition has also been hired to deliver the English @ Work curriculum in other communities. The training they provide in other communities is referred to as Literacy Forward. A flyer about English @ Work and a pamphlet describing Literacy Forward is available in the "presentations" tab on CAN's Language Access website.

Next Meeting

April 20, 2017 @ 9 AM at Lifeworks (835 N. Pleasant Valley Rd), East Multi-Purpose Room