

Part 4

Language Access

20 What if you prefer to communicate in a language other than English?

If you prefer to communicate in a language other than English, you are entitled to language services that will allow you to access documents and other communications in your language at every stage of the EA program.

Federal and state civil rights laws require DHCD to make sure that EA families with limited English proficiency can access the EA program. You are limited English proficient if you do not speak, read, write or understand English very well, and prefer to communicate with DHCD in your primary language. When you apply for EA, DHCD should ask you which language you prefer to communicate in. If you are not asked, tell the worker if you prefer to communicate in a language other than English. DHCD will have cards that allow you to point to your language. You will also be given a one page sheet with language access information.

If you speak Spanish, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Amharic, Portuguese or Cape Verdean Creole, you have the right to receive important EA documents in your language, such as application materials, shelter rules, and noncompliance and termination notices. DHCD will only translate the standardized portions of the documents into your language. You may ask DHCD or shelter workers for interpretation of any untranslated portions of important documents.

All EA families have the right to free oral interpretation for important EA communications and documents no matter the language they speak. DHCD will provide free oral interpretation in its field offices, Main Office, and Hearings Division. All EA shelters will provide free oral interpretation as well, either through staff that speak your language

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fluently or through a telephone interpreter service. If a DHCD or shelter staff member is not available to connect you with an interpretation service, you may call DHCD at (617) 573-1528 to access free, over-the-phone interpretation. This phone number is also listed on a notice in 25 languages that will be attached to all important EA documents.

Advocacy Tips:

- √ DHCD and shelter staff cannot ask friends, family members, children, or other shelter residents to interpret, unless it is an emergency. You may ask for a professional interpreter even if you, a friend, or family member speaks some English.
- √ If your preferred language is one of the languages in which program documents are available and yet you still receive documents in English, tell a DHCD or shelter staff member that you would like to receive documents in your language, and they must provide it to you in the translated language. Otherwise you can let them know you would like the English document read to you in your preferred language.
- √ DHCD has issued a Language Access Plan with more detailed information about language services. It will be posted on the DHCD website, <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/>.
- √ DHCD has appointed a Language Access Coordinator who can answer any questions and resolve issues related to language services. You may also file a language access complaint with the Language Access Coordinator, using the form on the DHCD website, <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/dhcd/>.
- √ The Language Access Coordinator is:

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