

Judicial Branch Limited English Proficiency Advisory Committee

Type: Standing Committee
Established: August 7, 2012
Chair: Hanna Sanders, Esq., Judicial Branch Access to Justice Coordinator
Report Date: Annually (on September 1st)
Reports to: Chiefs & Supreme Judicial Court

Background

Maine has become increasingly diverse, and the Maine court system continues to respond to the needs of a more diverse community. In addition, the court system continues to respond to the needs of Maine's deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Assuring language and hearing access to justice requires planning and a consistent commitment to quality services in court proceedings.

Supported and encouraged by the work of the Justice Action Group, a Task Force was created by the Supreme Judicial Court in June 2005 to develop a Limited English Proficiency Program Plan that addressed a number of issues involving court practices for obtaining and using interpreter services, training of interpreters, court staff, and attorneys, and translation of key court documents.

The Task Force completed its work with the adoption of Judicial Branch policies and Administrative Orders related to language and hearing access, and the individual members of the Task Force continued to work on various LEP projects including the on-going recruitment and training of interpreters, and the training of court staff and personnel on issues of cultural competency.

With the hiring of the Judicial Branch's first Access to Justice Coordinator in March 2012, the Judicial Branch anticipates an improved capacity to address LEP and cultural competency issues in a more direct and structured way. The creation of this Standing Advisory Committee is intended to assist the Access to Justice Coordinator, judicial leadership, the trial judges, and the rest of the Judicial Branch personnel with all of the issues associated with access to the court system by LEP individuals.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Advisory Committee is to advise the Access to Justice Coordinator and Judicial Branch leadership in

developing and maintaining a comprehensive system for providing and improving access to Maine courts for individuals with limited English proficiency or hearing loss.

II. Authority:

The Advisory Committee may seek input, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals and groups within and outside of the Judicial Branch. The Advisory Committee is authorized to study procedures considered by or in effect in other court systems and any other model procedures. It is authorized to consult with any person or organization as necessary.

Clerical assistance, as necessary, will be arranged through the Access to Justice Coordinator.

The Advisory Committee will:

- A. Review the current state of LEP and interpretation services in the Judicial Branch;
- B. Assist in the prioritization of needed improvements;
- C. Make recommendations regarding use of LEP policies and resources;
- D. Draft policies, administrative orders, or proposed statutes to support recommendations;
- E. Provide strategic support for requests that require legislative approval; and
- F. Make recommendations to the State Court Administrator, the Trial Court Chiefs, and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court.

III. Membership:

The membership on the Committee shall include the following, and may be augmented or modified from time to time at the request of the Chair with the approval of the Supreme Judicial Court. Members are appointed for three-year terms by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court, and may be reappointed for up to three additional terms by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Court.

Judicial Branch Access to Justice Coordinator, Chair, *ex officio*
Clerk, District Court
Clerk, Superior Court
State Judicial Marshal Representative
Justice, Maine Superior Court
Judge, Maine District Court

