

Frequently Asked Questions about the Community Legal Interpreter Bank

Q What languages are represented?

A The Bank provides interpreters in the languages identified in the DC Language Access Act (Spanish, French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Amharic, Korean, and American Sign Language) and additional languages according to requests from providers. Contact us for a current list.

Q Can a client contact the Bank directly to obtain an interpreter for a pro se matter?

A No. The Bank only serves legal service providers.

Q Do you provide interpreters for social services or community events?

A No. The Bank only provides interpreters for civil legal service providers.

Q What is the fee?

A The Bank currently provides services to the selected legal service providers for free. However, our funding is limited and we anticipate adding a fee schedule in the next phase.

Q What kind of training do you give the interpreters?

A Ayuda's unique three-day training focuses on techniques and ethical issues in legal interpreting within the context of the attorney-client relationship (confidentiality, privilege, and unauthorized practice of law), as well as an overview of the US legal system.

Q Why is it important to have a trained legal interpreter?

A Without properly trained legal interpreters, attorneys often rely on the client's friends, family, or community members to interpret. This can be dangerous, resulting in breach of confidentiality and the attorney-client privilege, improper and inaccurate interpreting, unauthorized practice of the law, and ultimately a miscarriage of justice.

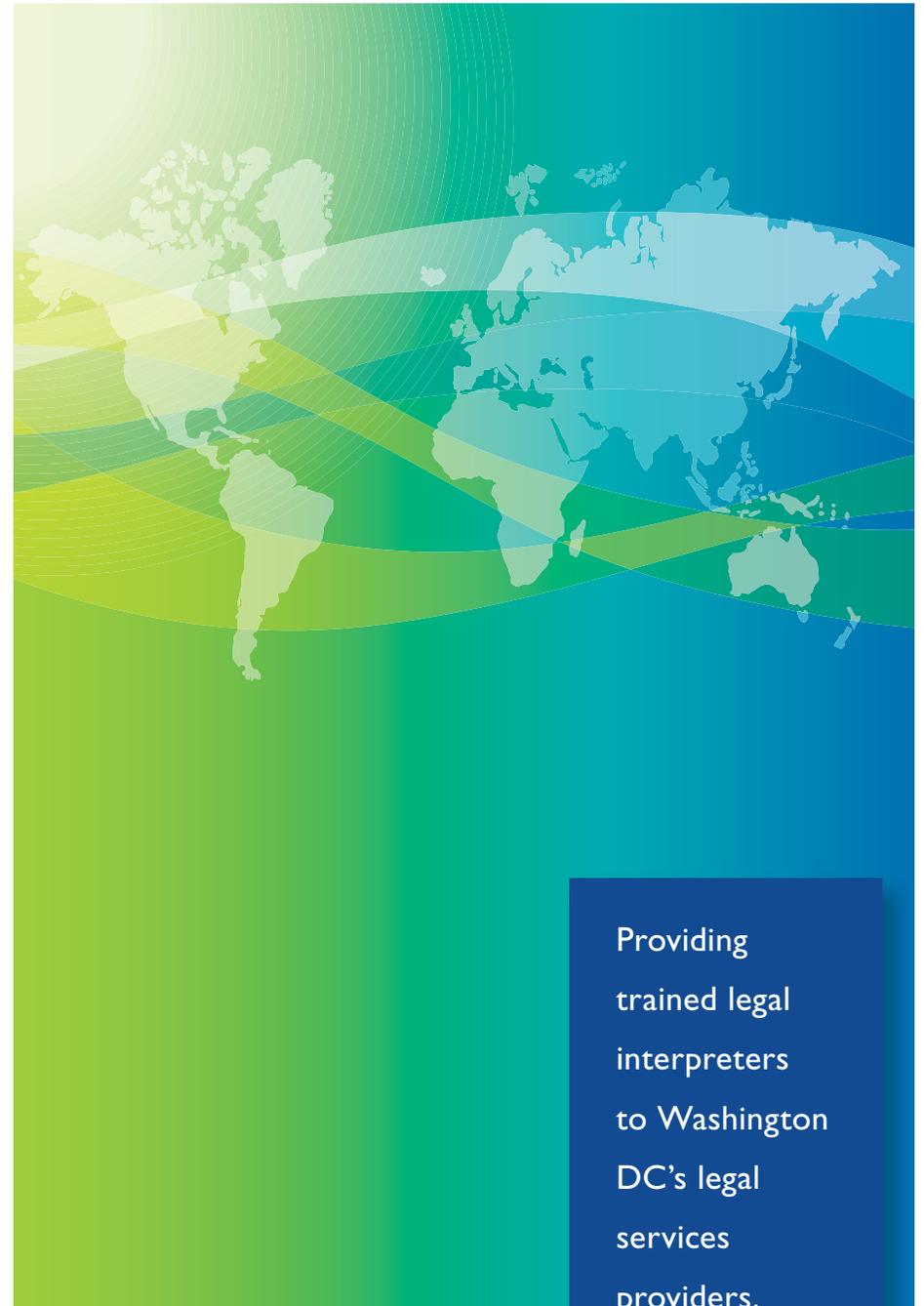
Q How do I get involved?

A Contact us to apply for an upcoming interpreter training, to learn how your organization can be included in the next Phase of the Bank, or to discuss strategies to increase access to justice for the Limited English Proficient and Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.

C O M M U N I T Y

LEGAL INTERPRETER BANK

A Project of
Ayuda



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HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

For years, DC legal service providers have struggled to address the needs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Deaf clients. They have turned some clients away or used friends, family, volunteers, or bilingual staff to try to meet these needs because there was no centralized registry or specialized training for legal interpreters working **outside** of the courtroom. The legal service provider community advocated for a collaborative solution.

The Community Legal Interpreter Bank, a project of Ayuda, is funded by a DC Council appropriation, created through the advocacy efforts of the DC Access to Justice Commission and the DC Consortium of Legal Services Providers and administered by the DC Bar Foundation. The Bank is required to address, at least, the six languages identified by the DC Language Access Act (Spanish, French, Chinese, Korean, Amharic, and Vietnamese) and American Sign Language. It is the first interpreter program in the US to provide professional training to interpreters targeted to the attorney-client relationship.

The Bank was formally established in April 2007

THE FIRST YEAR (April 2007 to April 2008) was dedicated to planning and development. Policies, procedures, and a training curriculum for legal interpreters working within the attorney-client context were developed. A small Pilot Project of a dozen highly trained and experienced interpreters and four legal service providers was initiated to provide initial feedback and some baseline data.

THE SECOND YEAR (May 2008 to April 2009) is dedicated to Phase I Implementation. Phase I objectives are to: carefully develop the Bank's policies and procedures, train interpreters in at least 10 languages, add American Sign Language interpreters, add translation services in at least 10 languages, and increase access to legal services for Limited English Proficient and Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients. During this time period, 10 legal services providers will have access to interpreters and translators at no cost to the provider. Spoken language interpreter placements will begin August 1, 2008 and will continue until April 30, 2009. Two spoken language interpreter training sessions will be held, resulting in a total of at least 30 interpreters who speak all of the DC Language Act languages. ASL interpreters as well as translation services will be added by January 1, 2009. A training curriculum for providers will be developed and trainings will be offered beginning in Fall 2008.

THE THIRD YEAR (May 2009 to April 2010) will see the expansion to Full Implementation. We will offer at least two interpreter training sessions, ending the year with at least 60 trained spoken language legal interpreters in the Bank. We will offer at least two provider training sessions, and offer interpreter placements and translation services to all non-profit civil legal service providers in the District. However, it is anticipated that the demand for interpreters will exceed available funding, thus (if no other funding source is located) *some fees will be charged*. The fee structure is currently in development.

THE FOURTH YEAR and beyond will be dedicated to Sustainability and Expansion. Language access is a regional problem and a regional solution is sensible. Expansion to Maryland and Virginia and further funding sources and mechanisms will be explored.

Interpreter and Translator Selection and Training

Spoken language interpreters are required to prove a high level of fluency in both English and their target language(s) as well as appropriate training in interpreter skills and ethics. Additionally, interpreters are required to successfully complete the specially designed training for interpreters in the legal services setting before being added to the Interpreter Bank. Qualifications for ASL interpreters and translators will be determined by December 1, 2008.

Community Legal Interpreter Bank Staff

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Feedback and Information

For further information, or to recommend improvements and changes to the Community Legal Interpreter Bank, please contact Jean Bruggeman at jean@ayuda.com, or Irfana Anwer at irfana@ayuda.com.