



Information for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Parents and Guardians and for Schools and School Districts that Communicate with Them

This fact sheet answers common questions about the rights of parents and guardians who do not speak, listen, read, or write English proficiently because it is not their primary language.

Must my child's school provide information to me in a language I can understand?

Yes. Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English. This includes, but is not limited to, information related to:

- registration and enrollment in school and school programs
- language assistance programs
- report cards
- student discipline policies and procedures
- special education and related services, and meetings to discuss special education
- parent-teacher conferences
- grievance procedures and notices of nondiscrimination
- parent handbooks
- gifted and talented programs
- magnet and charter schools
- requests for parent permission for student participation in school activities

Must a school provide language assistance if I request it even if my child is proficient in English and I am somewhat proficient in English?

Yes. Schools must respond to a parent's request for language assistance and remember that parents can be limited English proficient even if their child is proficient in English.

May my child's school ask my child, other students, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for me?

No. Schools must provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals and may not rely on or ask students, siblings, friends, or untrained school staff to translate or interpret for parents.

What information should I expect from the school if my child is an English learner?

When your child enrolls, you should receive a home language survey or similar form to fill out that helps the school identify potential English learners, who are eligible for language assistance services. If your child is identified as an English learner, the school must notify you in writing within 30 days of the school year starting with information about your child's English language proficiency level, programs and services available to meet your child's educational needs, and your right to opt your child out of a program or particular services for English learners. For more information about the rights of English learners, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-factsheet-el-students-201501.pdf>.



What type of processes can school districts use to identify limited English proficient parents?

- School districts must develop and implement a process for determining whether parents are limited English proficient and identifying their language needs.
- The process should be designed to identify all limited English proficient parents, including parents and guardians whose primary language is not common in the district or whose children are proficient in English.
- A school district may, for example, use a home language survey, to inquire whether a parent requires oral and/or written communication in a language other than English.
- The school's initial inquiry should, of course, be translated into languages that are common in the school and surrounding community so that the inquiry is designed to reach parents in a language they are likely to understand.

What steps must school districts take to provide effective language assistance to LEP parents?

- School districts must provide effective language assistance to limited English proficient parents, such as by offering translated materials or a language interpreter. Language assistance must be free and provided by appropriate and competent staff, or through appropriate and competent outside resources.
- School districts should ensure that interpreters and translators have knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts to be used in the communication at issue, and are trained on the role of an interpreter and translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality.
- It is not sufficient for the staff merely to be bilingual. For example, a staff member who is bilingual may be able to communicate directly with limited English proficient parents in a different language, but may not be competent to interpret in and out of that language, or to translate documents.

What can I do if I have questions, want additional information, or believe a school is not complying with these requirements?

- You may visit the website of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at www.ed.gov/ocr or contact OCR at (800) 421-3481 (TDD: 800-877-8339) or at ocr@ed.gov. For more information about filing a complaint, visit www.ed.gov/ocr/complaintintro.html.
- You may visit the website of the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division at www.justice.gov/crt/about/edu/ or contact DOJ at (877) 292-3804 or at education@usdoj.gov. For more information about filing a complaint, visit www.justice.gov/crt/complaint/#three.
- For more information about school districts' obligations to English learner students and limited English proficient parents, additional OCR guidance is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html>.