

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****November 15, 2022**

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SUBJECT: TRANSLATION GUIDELINES USED FOR MEETINGS AND INFORMATION

This informal report will provide an overview of the ways the City of Fort Worth provides translation services for residents.

City Council Meetings

If a resident is attending a City Council meeting and needs translation assistance, they can contact the City's ADA Coordinator. A boilerplate statement is included in all meeting notices that lets the resident know how to request assistance. When the request is made, a translator will be provided and will attend the meeting to assist the resident during the meeting. Residents are asked to provide at least 48 hours notice so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If the City does not receive notification at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, the City will make a reasonable attempt to provide the necessary accommodations.

Public Meetings

Information for most public meetings is provided in English and Spanish. All departments are encouraged to follow this practice. If someone requests assistance prior to the meeting, a translator will be assigned to the event. Sometimes the translator is a city employee and sometimes it is contracted through our vendor.

Court Appearances

Issued citations and court hearing notices contain instructions to make an accommodation request, including interpretation (verbal) or American Sign Language (ASL) services. The request can be made in person, by mail, or by phone. If required, a clerk then schedules a master-certified interpreter from our contracted provider to appear at the court. Interpretation services not requiring a master-certified interpreter are provided via city-certified interpreters (department employees) or online and phone interpretation using city-contracted vendors. Spanish language services are also included in the court's call center, phone tree, and online payment vendor. Translation (written) services are provided through city-contracted vendors. Translation services are provided for court community engagement events and, on occasion, court-related documents.

Call Centers

The City Call Center and the Water Call Center offer an option for residents to speak to a customer service representative in English or Spanish. The prompts are offered in the recording at the beginning of the call. Prompts are in English and Spanish. If the resident needs to have assistance with another language, the representative can get assistance through a contract vendor. There could be a slight delay in responding to this request. Response time is determined by the vendor and available translators.

City Departments

Most City departments that interact with the public on a daily basis have bilingual staff for residents who need assistance conducting City business. The City currently has 613 employees who receive bilingual pay. In order to receive the monthly stipend, the employees must pass a

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test for written and verbal fluency. Staff can test for speaking, writing and reading in their chosen language. We currently have staff who have passed the tests for the following languages: Spanish, Vietnamese, German, Hebrew, Cambodian, French, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Portuguese, Tagalog, Korean, Hmong, Urdu and Thai.

Emergency calls and incidents

The Fort Worth Police and Fire departments maintain a list of employees who speak various languages. This list can be used by staff to request an interpreter come to their location to help facilitate communications. If an interpreter is not available, a language hotline can be used to receive translation services as they interact with the public.

Videos

The City has started to add Spanish subtitles and voiceover to some videos and meeting recordings. We are looking for ways to expand this to include Spanish closed captioning during live meetings. Current technology is being evaluated.

Website

The City's website can be translated into more than 50 languages by using the translation tool on the website. Because Spanish and Vietnamese are the two most frequent languages used, we have placed buttons in the header for easy access. We have used flags and the words in their native language to make them easier to find.

Collateral material and graphics

Material developed for citywide campaigns is created in English and Spanish. If requested, other languages can be added. Departments are also encouraged to create material in English and Spanish, so that information is easily available to most residents. All election material and notices are prepared in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Tarrant County has a high enough percentage of Vietnamese residents to require the material is available in the third language.

Translation resources

The City has a contract service that is used for larger, technical documents and live meeting translations. There is also a contract for American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation.

Future Plans

These are some future plans to improve our accessibility for Spanish-speaking residents:

- The City is currently in the process of hiring a new Translator/Interpreter, who will be part of the Communications & Public Engagement Department. This new staff member will be evaluating our current translation policies and guidelines, and providing suggestions on how we improve our outreach to all Fort Worth residents. They will also be evaluating our online services to make sure they are easily accessible to our Spanish-speaking residents.



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- We will be developing a standard boilerplate statement for all city meetings, in English and Spanish. This will provide a consistent message for residents to receive needed accommodations. We will also include this information on the website.
- We will be upgrading the MyFW app to include Spanish. We are currently waiting for the vendor to make the needed upgrades for this to move forward. In the interim we will look at options for adding a message on the app to instruct our Spanish-speaking residents how they can contact our City Call Center for assistance.

Please feel free to direct all questions to Michelle Gutt, Communications & Public Engagement Director at michelle.gutt@fortworthtexas.gov or 817-392-6248.

David Cooke
City Manager