

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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April 6, 2022

TO: REGIONAL CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: FUNDING TO IMPROVE LANGUAGE ACCESS AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

The 2020-21 Budget Act includes \$16.7 million ongoing funding for regional centers to improve and promote Language Access and Cultural Competency to better support the language needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, their caregivers, and their family members. The primary purpose of these funds is to improve consumer and family experience and to facilitate more consistent access to information and services for multi-lingual, monolingual, and diverse cultural groups. This correspondence provides guidance on how regional centers may expend funding.

Welfare and Institutions Code §4620.4 requires that the Department of Developmental Services (Department) implement this initiative through its contracts with regional centers. These funds shall not supplant any existing efforts or funds for similar purposes but are intended to augment and provide maximum additional benefit to the greatest number of persons served, their caregivers, and their families. Language Access and Cultural Competency Plans shall be posted on the Department's and regional centers' websites.

The Department is requiring regional centers to annually submit through GrantVantage a Language Access and Cultural Competency Plan that includes strategies to address each of the following:

1. Identification of vital documents and internet website content for translation, as well as points of public contact in need of oral and sign language interpretation services.
2. Specialized orientations and group and family information sessions to locally identified linguistic and cultural groups with ample and publicized question and answer periods, scheduled at times considered most convenient for working families and in consultation with community leaders.
3. Regular and periodic community language needs assessments to determine threshold languages for document translation.
4. Coordination and streamlining of interpretation and translation services.
5. Implementation of internal and external quality control measures to ensure the availability, accuracy, readability, and cultural appropriateness of translations.

“Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices”

Additionally, Language Access and Cultural Competency Plans must include the following:

1. A language and culture profile of the regional center's catchment area and individuals served. Activities to develop these profiles may include:
 - a. Reviewing language and culture data provided by the Department.
 - b. Conducting surveys of consumers, families, service coordinators and service providers.
 - c. Gathering stakeholder input from any of the following:
 - i. Small group listening sessions focused on language access.
 - ii. Small group listening sessions focused on culture (e.g., African American, Native American, LGBTQ and/or other community group).
 - iii. Public community meetings (e.g., hosted in partnership with community-based organizations).
 - d. Coordination with other regional centers who also serve small diverse populations (e.g., Armenian, Cambodian, Hmong, Slavic, etc.).
2. Outline of activities to implement the Language Access and Cultural Competency Plan. Activities to implement the Plan may include:
 - a. Identifying language access and cultural resource needs for the catchment area (e.g., identifying policy changes, bilingual staff needs, language access materials, and other identified community needs).
 - b. Identifying bilingual and bicultural staffing needs. Expenditures for staffing needs shall not exceed 50 percent of the total allocation and will require Department approval.
 - c. Identifying community partners (e.g., self-advocates, families, community-based organizations, public agencies, and private entities) to provide input on language and cultural needs, materials to be translated or provided in plain language and other modalities.
 - d. Translating and conducting culturally competent reviews of documents or updates to websites, including a review by self-advocates and families.
 - e. Providing consistent and culturally competent language interpretation in individual planning meetings and public meetings (e.g., Self-Determination Program Local Advisory Committee meetings and activities).
3. Timelines for completion with short-term and long-term goals that may extend beyond a fiscal year. Regional centers shall provide semi-annual progress reports in GrantVantage utilizing standardized measures established by the Department and regional center measures approved by the Department, and an accounting of how funds have been utilized. The Department will provide regional centers with training and technical assistance. Due dates for plans and reports will be as follows:

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- a. Language Access and Cultural Competency Plan due by June 15
- b. Semi-Annual Progress Report due by October 1
- c. Semi-Annual Progress Report due by April 1

Language Access and Cultural Competency Plans must be posted on the Department's and regional centers' websites.

For reference, the Department will email each regional center with individual regional center language data for use in the development of the Language Access and Cultural Competency Plan. If you have questions, please contact me at (916) 926-3108 or leinani.walter@dds.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by:

LEINANI WALTER
Chief Equity Officer
Service Access and Equity Division

cc: Regional Center Administrators
Regional Center Directors of Consumer Services
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