

**CIRCUIT COURT OF GREEN LAKE COUNTY  
LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN  
NARRATIVE**

**SECTION I - LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE**

This document serves as the plan for **Green Lake County Circuit Court** to help ensure access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). It is designed to respond to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the requirements imposed by Executive Order 13166, and related guidance. It also covers interpreter services to deaf and hard of hearing persons under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Wisconsin law.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and effective language assistance to persons with limited English proficiency who come in contact with **Green Lake County Circuit Court**. It is designed to be read in conjunction with the Wisconsin Director of State Courts Plan explaining the relevant federal law and guidance.

Counties that receive federal funding for court programs are required to submit a language assistance plan to the director's office every two years. The U.S. Department of Justice has the right to investigate complaints against any federally-funded agency that does not provide free language services when necessary to participate in the program. An agency's federal funding may be withheld until the complaint is resolved.

**SECTION II – NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

The circuit court of each county is responsible for conducting a needs assessment and developing a local language assistance plan to meet the court-related needs of the county population.

**1. Demographics.**

The demographic data for **Green Lake County** is listed below:

POPULATION	NUMBER	PERCENT OF COUNTY POPULATION
Hispanic	393	2.1%
Hmong	29	.2%
German, Other West German languages		
Number of people age 5 and older who speak English less than "very well"		3.4%

## 2. Service information.

### In Green Lake County

- A. The courts need interpreters for these types of cases primarily: CRIMINAL AND FORFEITURE VIOLATIONS
- B. The courts need Spanish interpreters weekly
- C. The courts need Hmong interpreters rarely
- D. The courts need sign language interpreters rarely
- E. The courts need interpreters in the following languages Albanian, Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian, Deaf Relay, Lao but on a rare basis.

## 3. Costs.

**Green Lake County** will monitor the amount spent on court interpreter services and the amount reimbursed by the state. As the county LEP population increases, the number of interpreter appointments will necessarily increase. Since Wisconsin state laws changed requiring courts to provide interpreters in all cases, the need for interpreters will also likely increase.

**Green Lake County** costs for interpreters and reimbursement:

YEAR	AMOUNT COUNTY SPENT ON INTERPRETER SERVICES	AMOUNT STATE REIMBURSED COUNTY FOR INTERPRETER SERVICES	PERCENTAGE
2007	\$5,019.12	\$259.00 (Quarter 4 – 2007)	
2006	\$3,071.50	Didn't submit for reimbursement	
2005	\$2,787.78	Didn't submit for reimbursement	
2004	\$3,402.74	Didn't submit for reimbursement	

It should be noted that Green Lake County did not commence seeking re-imbursement for interpreter services until the fourth quarter of 2007.

## SECTION III – COURT RESPONSIBILITIES

**State court responsibilities.** The director of state courts office has made great progress in improving court interpreter services statewide. The supreme court has supported this effort through requests for additional funding, statutory changes, and changes to court rules. The director's office will continue its central role in training and testing interpreters, training judges and court staff, translating court materials, and pursuing statutory changes and funding. The state court interpreter program is described on the court's website at <http://www.wicourts.gov/circuit/CourtInterpreter.htm>.

**Circuit court responsibilities.** In Wisconsin, the direct provision of interpreter services, including scheduling and payment, is the responsibility of the circuit courts. The obligation to identify and provide services to LEP persons lies with the circuit courts under Wis. Stats.

§885.38(3)(a) and §885.38(8)(a). Initial identification may be done by the clerk of courts office, a judicial assistant, or other court staff. Interpreter needs may also be pointed out by the district attorney, the public defender, community advocates, or others. The ultimate responsibility for appointment of an in-court interpreter belongs to the judge. Clerks of circuit court may appoint for interpreter services used in the clerk's office. §885.38(3)(d).

In the instance of a foreign language interpreter, Green Lake County Circuit Court works in cooperation with the local law enforcement agencies for determination for the need of a court interpreter. If the law enforcement officer at the time of a traffic stop or criminal arrest requires the assistance of an interpreter, the law enforcement agency will notify the Clerk of Circuit Court of this. The Clerk of Circuit Court is then able to make the arrangements for a language interpreter for the court hearing and there is very little delay. If a person is held in custody pending bond hearing or initial appearance, the County Jail will advise the Clerk of Circuit Court as to the need for a language interpreter.

The primary obligation to pay for court interpreter services also rests with the county. Counties may be reimbursed by the state from an annual appropriation to the director of state courts office, under §885.38(8)(a) and §758.19. The criteria for state reimbursement are set by statute and are summarized in Attachment D. Reimbursement is provided for all in-court proceedings in all case types regardless of indigency and for some out-of-court services with court approval.  
885.38(3)(e)

Interpreters or other services will be provided to deaf and hard-of-hearing court users covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) when needed. The costs of these services will be borne by the county and will not be charged to the court user, indigent or not.

## **SECTION IV – RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

**Statewide resources.** Information about training, hiring, and using interpreters is on the court's website at <http://www.wicourts.gov/circuit/CourtInterpreter.htm>. The website contains statutes, court rules, and most of the case law applicable to court interpreters. Information about statewide resources is also contained in the director's language assistance plan.

To take full advantage of the state programs:

- All interpreters who work regularly in the courts should attend court training programs. Court staff will inform local interpreters about training opportunities.
- Court staff will make state-translated forms available to appropriate court users. Courts will evaluate requested local materials and consider having them translated by accredited professional translators. State-translated forms are available on the court website at <http://wicourts.gov/forms1/circuit.htm>
- Courts will use "I speak" cards to help identify which language a court user speaks.
- Courts will post signs in visible locations informing court users of the right to an interpreter.

## **Appointing an interpreter.**

Court staff and judges should be aware that many people who need an interpreter will not request one because they do not realize that interpreters are available or because they do not recognize the high level of communication skills needed in court. When it appears an individual has difficulty communicating, the court should err on the side of providing an interpreter to ensure full access to the courts. The circuit courts are also responsible for providing assistance to LEP and deaf and hard of hearing individuals on the phone and at the clerks counter.

### ***In-Court Interpreters***

In the instance of a foreign language interpreter, Green Lake County Circuit Court works in cooperation with the local law enforcement agencies for determination for the need of a court interpreter. If the law enforcement officer at the time of a traffic stop or criminal arrest requires the assistance of an interpreter, the law enforcement agency will notify the Clerk of Circuit Court of this. The Clerk of Circuit Court is then able to make the arrangements for a language interpreter for the court hearing and there is very little delay. If a person is held in custody pending bond hearing or initial appearance, the County Jail will advise the Clerk of Circuit Court as to the need for a language interpreter.

Green Lake County plans for at least one afternoon per month to handle cases that involve a Spanish speaking interpreter. The selected afternoons are pre-determined the year before and given to staff. When we are alerted to an interpreter case, an appropriate hearing will be scheduled for that particular afternoon. If it is a criminal case, the defendant will be scheduled to meet with the District Attorney prior to their hearing. The hearing later in the afternoon is a follow-up to the conference to confirm what type of hearing is to be scheduled next.

An internal benefit to this type of scheduling is cost savings. There are fewer trips the interpreter needs to make to the Green Lake County Courthouse.

Green Lake County Circuit Court uses the codes incorporated as part of the Consolidated Courts Automation Program to “flag” if a file needs an interpreter. Staff also uses the codes available so that certain documents generated from the system will print in both English and Spanish. Our court interpreter is added into the case as a party so that notices are automatically generated for her.

Green Lake County Circuit Court has contacted several of the colleges/universities within a couple hour range of Green Lake County when seeking a foreign language interpreter for more rare spoken languages. The staff at the colleges are used as a resource as to suggestions of locating an interpreter for a rare spoken language. Arrangements have been made in the past to use an interpreter via telephone.

### ***Out-of- Court Interpreters***

There have been few instances where a party comes to the counter and seeks assistance for a language barrier. When this has occurred the party has brought along an individual to assist with the information being sought.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:** A certified interpreter should be the first choice for appointment if available. When a diligent effort has been made to find a certified court interpreter and none is available, the court may appoint a non-certified court interpreter who is on the statewide roster. If neither a certified nor roster interpreter is available, the court may appoint a non-certified interpreter who is not listed on the statewide roster and who is otherwise qualified.

**RECOMMENDED PRACTICE:** The court may also use a video or telephone interpreter in appropriate circumstances. Telephone interpreting can be a good choice if the hearing is short, if the distance an interpreter will have to travel is long, or if a rare language is needed. A well-qualified interpreter hired over the phone is a better choice than a poorly-qualified local interpreter or a non-professional

**Local resources.** Community resources may be of assistance in finding interpreters or translators. They include social services agencies, community groups and cultural centers, professional interpreting and translating agencies, college language departments, local hospitals, and schools. Courts understand that interpreters from these sources are not necessarily prepared to do court work and will be questioned carefully about their qualifications. Court interpreters will be hired from the roster whenever possible.

## **SECTION V – PUBLIC INPUT**

A copy of this LEP is posted on this court's website and can be found at [www.co.green-lake.wi.us](http://www.co.green-lake.wi.us). Copies of state and local language assistance plans may be available to the public upon request.

Complaints regarding language access and services may be brought to the attention of the district court administrator and to the director's office for review. Complaints about interpreters who have allegedly engaged in unethical or unprofessional conduct in the course of performing their interpreter duties should be similarly reported. A grievance procedure for filing complaints against interpreters was developed and is posted on the court's website at <http://wicourts.gov/services/public/interpretercomplaint.htm>

**Sixth District Court Administrator  
Ron Ledford  
3317 Business Park Drive, Suite A  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481  
(715) 345-5295**

## **SECTION VI - TRAINING**

**Circuit court staff training.**

Front line staff members are often the first points of contact with LEP individuals. Deputy clerks of courts and judicial assistants will be trained on ways to identify limited English proficiency, best practices on delivering services, and cultural issues. Staff will also be reminded of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As new employees are hired, information on the language assistance plan and the ADA will be included in their new employee orientation.

## **SECTION VII - EVALUATION**

**Evaluation of the language assistance plan.** Biennially, the director's office will coordinate with the circuit courts to review the effectiveness of the plan, to identify problems and proposed action. Elements of the evaluation will include:

- number of LEP persons receiving court interpreters
- assessment of whether staff members adequately understand language assistance policies
- determination if additional services or translated materials should be provided
- feedback from community groups and individuals in the service area of each court.

Each county's language assistance plan shall be approved by the presiding judge or other judge and filed with the director's office. The first plan is due March 1, 2004. The plan and any future revisions should be communicated to all employees.

**Local contact person.** A court staff member is designated to coordinate language services with other county agencies and with the director's office. This person is listed below:

**Susan J. Krueger**  
**Clerk of Circuit Court**  
**Green Lake County Courthouse**  
**492 Hill Street – P.O. Box 3188**  
**Green Lake, Wisconsin 54941-3188**  
**(920) 294-4142**

**State contact person.** For questions about interpretation and implementation of this plan, please contact Carmel Capati, Office of Court Operations, 110 East Main St. #410, Madison WI 53703. Phone 608-266-8635; e-mail [carmel.capati@wicourts.gov](mailto:carmel.capati@wicourts.gov).

CIRCUIT COURT OF Green Lake COUNTY  
 LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN  
 DEMOGRAPHICS AND INITIAL DATA

Please fill in the following information for this county:

**1. Demographics.**

For this county:

- A. The Hispanic population is 393, or 2.1 % of the county population.
- B. The Hmong population is 29, or .2 % of the county population.
- C. Other common languages include: German + other west German languages.
- D. The number of people age 5 and older who speak English less than "very well" is \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ % of the county population.

**2. Service information.**

A. The courts need interpreters primarily for these types of cases (check all that apply):

- criminal     juvenile     traffic     CHIPS     small claims
- civil     probate     family     restraining orders

B. The courts need Spanish interpreters:

- daily     weekly     monthly     rarely

C. The courts need Hmong interpreters:

- daily     weekly     monthly     rarely

D. The courts need sign language interpreters:

- daily     weekly     monthly     rarely

E. The courts need other interpreters:

- daily     weekly     monthly     rarely

languages (check all that apply):

- |  |  |                                  |
|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Albanian                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese-Cantonese     | <input type="checkbox"/> French  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese-Mandarin      | <input type="checkbox"/> Greek   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deaf Relay | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulgarian                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Farsi                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian |

- |   |                                     |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese               | <input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese | <input type="checkbox"/> Ukrainian  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Khmer                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Punjabi    | <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Korean                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Russian    | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lao         | <input type="checkbox"/> Somali     |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mai-Mai/Bantu          | <input type="checkbox"/> Thai       |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Polish                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tibetan    |                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ |                                     |                                     |

**3. Federally-funded programs:**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> VAWA                         | <input type="checkbox"/> drug court                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> CHIPS subgrant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> juvenile delinquency funding | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> child support cooperative agreement |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> law enforcement grant        | <input type="checkbox"/> federal training grant                         | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____   |

**4. Local language and cultural resources:**

- Community groups:
- Social services agencies:
- Interpreting & translating agencies:
- Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges:
- Hospitals:

**5. Evaluation measures:**

- all court personnel who interact with the public will be informed of this plan
- all court personnel who work with the public, or who appoint or work with interpreters, will receive the two-page summary on effective use of interpreters
- signs will be posted in visible locations informing court users that interpreters are available
- clerk of court staff and intake staff will be given "I speak" cards for identifying language needs (available on court website)
- all staff who hire interpreters will be informed of the court interpreter roster and hire interpreters from it (available on court website)
- court staff will use translated material available from the state and locally (available on court website)
- this plan will be filed with the county administration and distributed to interested community groups and agencies as requested
- new staff will be informed of the plan as they are hired

6. **Local contact person.** The following person has been designated to coordinate language services with other county agencies and with the director's office:

Susan J. Krueger - Clerk of Circuit Court

7. **Effective date.** The effective date of this language assistance plan is Nov. 1, 2008.

Judge 