

MATRIX POLICY FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS, CULTURAL COMPETENCE, & DISABILITY ACCESS

Matrix ensures equitable access to and participation in its activities for all families in the four county area in California: Marin, Napa, Solano, Sonoma Counties, with special attention paid to ensuring access for the most underserved families due to poverty, disability, race, color, language, ethnicity, immigrant status or national origin, gender, or age. Our mission embodies a focus on families of children with special needs, particularly underserved families and children at greatest risk: “Empowering families of children with special needs to understand and access the systems that serve them.”

We collaborate with a multitude of government and community-based agencies in communities housing high concentrations of traditionally underrepresented families. Our diverse staff, which is representative of the four county area served population, is developing the capacity to reach and engage families from all communities throughout our catchment area. Parents are encouraged and supported to participate regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, or language. Trainings and materials are provided in multiple languages, including simultaneous translation to ensure equal participation in multiple languages, including sign language. All project activities are located in accessible buildings and in areas that can be reached by public transportation. In particular, Matrix ensures access by conducting the following activities:

- Identifying and using materials that are user-friendly for families with low-literacy; translating them into Spanish and making them available in varied formats; piloting them with diverse families to ensure understandability and usefulness; and revising them as appropriate based on parent feedback;
- Operating a website that has information in English and Spanish and that can be accessed by families and professionals who are blind or visually impaired;
- Conducting workshops in English and Spanish languages including sign language as needed, including monolingual workshops in Spanish and workshops using simultaneous translation, and advertising availability of interpretation services on all outreach materials;
- Conducting activities in locations accessible by public transportation whenever possible, are always disability-accessible, and providing support to enable low-income families to access services;
- Hiring staff who are representative of the diverse communities we serve (consistent with our current hiring and staffing patterns, which reflect diversity), including staff who are bilingual, and/or who have disabilities;
- Working with community and faith-based organizations with experience and expertise in working with and serving diverse communities, including organizations such as Canal Community Alliance, Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, health clinics, public health and social service organizations that have expertise in working with individuals with disabilities, such as the Centers for Independent Living, and others;
- Continually monitoring the impact of services, including the diversity of participants, to ensure that families and professionals who participate in our activities reflect the full diversity of the four county area, as well as the extent to which various categories of participants indicate that project services

are of high quality, are useful, and meet their needs, and using information from surveys, focus groups, evaluations, and interviews to improve appropriateness and effectiveness of the project for diverse families and professionals;

- Targeting intensive services to families who are most underrepresented and in greatest need, and in geographic areas where underrepresented families live, taking into consideration that families who face barriers to equitable participation often require more intensive, focused, and targeted services to ensure they understand and can use information and skills;
 - Conducting outreach about project services in ethnic media and via community- and faith-based organizations that serve the most underrepresented families;
 - Making information available in multiple formats and through multiple mechanisms, including the web, hard copy of information, easy-to-read versions of information, and trainings that can be varied to meet participant needs (for example, conducting a basic rights in special education or an IDEA/NCLB workshop over several sessions for families with limited literacy, limited English skills, or limited cognitive abilities, or conducting workshops in the evening, during the weekday, and on weekends, or conducting workshops via teleconference or the web for parents with limited transportation or who have physical disabilities that limit their travel);
 - Conducting activities at multiple times, such as in the evening, during the weekday (for example, lunch hour and evening, or weekends (including Saturdays and Sundays to respect diverse religious beliefs and practices);
 - Using research-based practices that have been proven effective with diverse populations;
 - Asking diverse families and professionals themselves how they can most easily and effectively access services, and varying services to meet those expressed needs; and
- Ensuring that subcontractors have language, culture, and disability access policies.

Responsible Parties:

Matrix's Executive Director, under the direction of the Matrix's Board of Directors, is responsible for implementation and monitoring of Matrix's language, culture, and disability access policies, including ensuring that Matrix staff are aware of and compliant with these policies. Matrix's Director of Parent Services ensures that workshop and support materials are translated into needed languages and that workshops are available in multiple languages as needed. Matrix's Office Manager maintains the contract with the Language Line .

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE 1:

To assess family language access needs and Matrix's capacities on an ongoing basis.

Activity 1.1: Matrix collects unduplicated data by "language spoken" each year by October 30. Collected data is reviewed by Matrix's Director and Management team for planning, budgeting, and development and implementation of annual Language Access plans.

Activity 1.2: Matrix will facilitate a cultural and linguistic competence self-assessment using the National Center for Cultural Competence's Cultural and Linguistic Competence Family Organization Self-Assessment tool every three years, involving the entire staff, to assess the knowledge base of staff around cultural and linguistic competence and the effectiveness of the language access plan.

Activity 1.3: Matrix will solicit the feedback of LEP families regarding the effectiveness of its training and technical assistance for LEP families on an annual basis by ensuring that LEP families are part of the pool of families contacted for follow-up surveys.

OBJECTIVE 2:

To translate vital documents into the LEP languages largely served by Matrix within 4 months of their development. A "vital document" is defined as outreach and educational materials published by Matrix that inform families about their rights or available training, technical assistance, and support services. This provision also applies to all contractors/vendors that Matrix funds to carry out services to our constituency.

Activity 2.1: Matrix routinely surveys all existing English language forms, outreach and educational materials (including fact sheets, resources guides, and powerpoint presentations), and other resources to identify documents that should be translated because they convey critical information. Matrix's Project Directors discuss the highest priority documents and timelines for translation.

Activity 2.2: Matrix contracts with bilingual staff with expertise in written translation to translate materials. For language for which Matrix does not have bilingual staff with the qualifications or capacity to translate written materials, Matrix contracts with community-based organizations with expertise in written translation to translate materials. Matrix has bilingual staff "proof" the translated documents, and then conducts focus groups with families when materials have been translated to assess quality of translation, provide effective quality controls, and involve LEP families in the process.

Activity 2.3: Matrix makes translated materials available to the public through multiple agency points of contact, including our website, are at the two offices staffed by Matrix and telephone technical assistance through our 800 toll-free number.

Activity 2.4: Matrix will respond to correspondence written in a non-English language by soliciting the assistance of our staff, and through collaboration with community-based organizations for languages other than those spoken by Matrix staff. Matrix responds to email correspondence from Spanish-

speaking families using Spanish-speaking staff, and/or web-based Spanish language translation programs, that allows parents and professionals to communicate with each other bi-directionally (family sends email in Spanish, professional receives it in English and Spanish; professional sends email to family in English, family receives it in English and Spanish).

OBJECTIVE 3:

To provide oral language services through a diverse bilingual workforce, partnerships with immigrant and community-based agencies, and the language line, on an ongoing basis. “Oral language services” means the provision of oral information necessary to enable limited or no-English proficiency families to access or participate in programs or services offered by Matrix.

Activity 3.1: Matrix services include placement of bilingual staff in public contact positions; the provision of experienced and trained staff interpreters; contracting with telephone interpreter programs (the Language Line); contracting with private interpreter services as needed; and using interpreters made available through community services organizations that are publicly funded for that purpose.

Activity 3.2: Matrix will include this provision in contracts/subcontracts with all contractors/vendors that Matrix funds to carry out services to its public.

Activity 3.3: Matrix will ensure that all staff are aware of its policy that use of family members as interpreters is prohibited unless all other mechanisms have been exhausted (for a very low incidence language), and then only with the consent of the parent. Use of children as interpreters is absolutely prohibited.

Activity 3.4: Matrix has a bilingual (Spanish) Administrative Assistant who is available to answer phone calls from Spanish-speaking families. Matrix also has bilingual family information and support staff available to speak to non-English speaking families, and prioritizes hiring of bilingual staff and placing them in communities with high numbers of LEP families. Matrix works with community-based and immigrant-serving organizations to assist in communicating with non-English speaking families. Matrix pays bilingual staff for utilization of their oral and written language translation skills.

Activity 3.5: Matrix informs LEP families of the availability of language assistance via its website as well as a recorded message in Spanish on its answering machine attached to its toll-free number.

Activity 3.6: Matrix informs LEP families that they may access simultaneous translation at workshops, mini-conferences, and statewide conferences, and contracts with qualified, trained interpreters to translate oral presentations simultaneously with the English language presentation using simultaneous translation equipment that Matrix has purchased.

OBJECTIVE 4:

To enhance the capacity of Matrix staff to effectively provide language access to and serve LEP families.

Activity 4.1: Matrix will conduct one linguistic or cultural competence professional development to Matrix staff each year. This professional development includes its policies and procedures for language assistance activities/resources, including how to use Matrix's telephonic interpretation services and how to request translation of Matrix written materials and access such written materials to share with families.

Activity 4.2: Matrix will develop an on-going Cultural Competence and Language Access Taskforce that oversees implementation and assessment of the Action Plan.

OBJECTIVE 5:

To conduct outreach activities that target LEP populations served or encountered by Matrix on services and programs offered by Matrix on an ongoing basis. These activities include providing LEP communities with information about Matrix's benefits and services and language access plans.

Activity 5.1: Matrix organizes events in LEP communities including fairs, community meetings, educational workshops, etc., in collaboration with community-based organizations, including at least one parent leadership development training series in Spanish each year.

Activity 5.2: Matrix disseminates information through LEP media outlets including LEP TV, newspapers, and radio.

Activity 5.3: Matrix routinely distributes flyers, brochures, and other printed material, including DOE/EI documents, in non-English languages, particularly Spanish, including by having materials available at community-based organizations serving LEP families such as immigrant organizations and health centers

Activity 5.4: Matrix disseminates information through its own and partner websites.

Activity 5.5 Matrix sponsors/co-sponsors and participates in educational, informational, cultural and social events in LEP communities on an ongoing basis, including collaborating with the state immigrant advocacy organization in providing workshops to LEP families on their language access rights and advocacy strategies to secure language access.

Certification of Language Access Plan Approval for Matrix

Matrix's language access plan meets the standards and criteria outlined in the following checklist:

APPROVAL CHECKLIST

A successful Language Access Plan aligns the overall furnished information or rendered services, programs or activities to improvement objectives with the following three criteria. To qualify as an approved Language Access Plan for a specific covered entity, the plan must meet these criteria. It is critical that Language Access planning not be viewed or treated as a separate exercise. There must be strong connections between the proposed program, services, or activities of the covered entity and the plan improvements.

___ The plan establishes clear goals and a realistic strategy for the covered entity to provide public services, programs, and activities State residents with limited or no-English proficiency.

___ The plan provides for a sufficient budget to acquire and maintain the public services, programs, and activities that will be needed to implement the strategy for improved data collection, oral language services and written language services.

___ The plan includes an evaluation process that enables Matrix's Board, Director, and the Management Staff to track and monitor progress toward the specified goals and make mid-course corrections in response to new developments and opportunities as they arise.

Approved by:

Matrix Board President: _____

Date: _____

Matrix Director: *Nora Thompson*

Date: 1/14/11