

PEAK Parent Center

Language Access, Cultural Competence, & Disability Access Policy

Developed February, 2011

PEAK Parent Center ensures equitable access to and participation in its activities for all Colorado families 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. The mission of PEAK Parent Center as a private non-profit parent organization is “to provide training, information and technical assistance to equip families of children birth through twenty-six, including all disability conditions, with strategies to advocate successfully for their children.” PEAK is committed to improving the lives and education of ALL children through a special emphasis on children with disabilities. PEAK affirms the right of all individuals, from all backgrounds and cultures, with or without disabilities, to an appropriate education and other needed services. We seek to make that right a reality by providing information, education, outreach, and support to and for families with children across the state of Colorado.

PEAK’s primary office is located in Colorado Springs, a moderately sized urban area of Colorado; however, PEAK has a strong presence in Denver (Colorado’s largest urban area and the state capital) and employs regional parent mentors in urban and rural areas of the state. This enables PEAK to provide statewide coverage and to reach out to the significant number of underserved families who are impacted by issues related to diverse ethnicity and language barriers as well as those located in remote areas geographically as well as those areas highly impacted by poverty. PEAK has a long history of collaborating with schools, community-based organizations, hospitals, and local, state, and federal agencies in Colorado.

PEAK collaborates with many government and community-based agencies in communities housing high concentrations of traditionally underrepresented families. PEAK strives to maintain a diverse staff that is representative of Colorado’s population and has the capacity to reach and engage families from all communities throughout Colorado. Parents are encouraged and supported to participate in PEAK activities regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, or language. PEAK’s key trainings and materials are available in Spanish, which is the primary language next to English spoken in the state. PEAK’s Spanish language trainings are conducted by one of our two Spanish speaking staff (one of whom is a native Spanish speaker). In addition, PEAK owns and utilizes a FM translation system that, when used with a skilled interpreter, provides simultaneous interpretation at PEAK workshops and conferences in whatever language is needed. All of PEAK’s activities are located in accessible buildings.

PEAK is committed to ensuring access by conducting the following activities:

- Identifying and utilizing materials that are user-friendly for families with low-literacy; translating into multiple languages as needed, and making materials available in varied formats; piloting them with diverse families to ensure understandability and usefulness; and, based on parent feedback, revising materials as appropriate
- Updating its website to provide access to information in multiple languages and in formats accessible for individuals with disabilities
- Conducting workshops in multiple languages including sign language as needed, monolingual workshops in Spanish, workshops using simultaneous translation, and advertising availability of interpretation services on all outreach materials
- Conducting accessible activities with supports for participation by individuals with disabilities and low-income families
- Hiring staff who are representative of the diverse communities served (consistent with our current hiring and staffing patterns which reflect Colorado's diversity), including staff who are bilingual and/or who have disabilities
- Conducting cultural competence training for PEAK staff, Board, and parent volunteers to ensure skill in working with diverse families and informing them at least annually of PEAK's language, culture, and disability access policies
- Working with community and faith-based organizations with experience and expertise in working with and serving diverse communities, including organizations such as El Grupo Vida, the Hmong American Association of Colorado, Homeward Pikes Peak, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, the Centers for Independent Living, the Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People, the Denver Community Parent Resource Center and others
- Employing multiple strategies (including surveys, focus groups, follow-up calls, etc.) to obtain input from diverse family members as well as recommendations regarding strategies to ensure that PEAK's services meet the needs of the full range of CO families who speak languages other than English, are racially or ethnically diverse, or who have disabilities themselves
- Continually monitoring the impact of services, including the diversity of participants, to ensure that families and professionals who participate in PEAK activities reflect the full diversity of CO, 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 copies, resources at multiple reading levels, and workshops that can be varied to meet participant needs. (For example, conducting a basic rights in special education or an IDEA workshop over several sessions for families with limited literacy, limited English skills, or limited cognitive abilities; conducting workshops via teleconference or the web for parents with limited transportation, time, or physical disabilities that limit their travel)
- Conducting activities at multiple times convenient for families, such as in the evening, during the weekday (for example, teleconferences during the lunch hour or evenings after children's bedtime that fathers and working mothers may find easier to participate in) 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
- Providing PEAK's language, culture, and disability access policies to vendors and sub-contractors and requesting that they adopt or follow these policies

Throughout its activities and services, PEAK Parent Center will utilize the Spanish Language Glossary that is currently being developed by SPAN and the Multicultural Workgroup from the Parent Center Network.

Responsible Parties:

PEAK's Executive Director and Project Directors, under the direction of the PEAK Board of Directors, are responsible for implementation and monitoring of PEAK's language, culture, and disability access policies, including ensuring that PEAK staff are aware of and compliant with these policies. PEAK's technology staff maintains responsibility for the website connections and access to web-based language translation programs to ensure that PEAK's website is accessible or links to resources in multiple languages.

PEAK 's Project Directors are responsible for ensuring that key products developed by their project are translated into Spanish at a minimum and for considering the need to translate those products into other languages. They also ensure that workshop and support materials are translated into needed languages and that workshops are available in multiple languages as requested.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE 1: *To assess family language access needs and PEAK capacities on an ongoing basis.*

Activity 1.1: PEAK will collect Colorado data by language spoken each year by September 30. Collected data will be reviewed by PEAK's Executive Director, Management team, and project lead staff for planning, budgeting, and development and implementation of annual Language Access Plans.

Activity 1.2: PEAK 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: PEAK will solicit the feedback of Limited English Proficient (LEP) families regarding the effectiveness of its training, technical assistance for LEP families, and quality of interpretation services on an annual basis by employing multiple strategies (including surveys, focus groups, follow-up calls, etc.) to ensure that PEAK's services meet the needs of the target audience.

OBJECTIVE 2: *To translate vital documents into the LEP languages largely served by PEAK within 2 months of their development. A vital document is defined as outreach and educational materials published by PEAK that inform families about their rights or available training, technical assistance, and support services. This provision also applies to all contractors that PEAK funds to carry out direct services to our constituency.*

Activity 2.1: PEAK will annually review all of its existing English language forms, outreach and educational materials including fact sheets, resource guides, PowerPoint presentations, and other resources to identify documents that should be translated because they convey critical information. PEAK's Project Directors will assess the results and prioritize targets and timelines for translation.

Activity 2.2: PEAK will contract with professional translators with expertise in written translation to translate materials. PEAK's bilingual staff proof all translated documents. PEAK will establish an advisory committee that includes families to assess quality of translation, provide effective quality controls, and involve LEP families in the process.

Activity 2.3: PEAK will make translated materials available to the public through multiple agency points of contact, including our website, staffing the PEAK office with one bilingual staff person at all times; provision of telephone technical assistance through our 800 toll-free number; dissemination of materials through Parent Mentors

across the state through local support groups and community resources. PEAK will research quality recorded teleconferences and podcasts and create a bank of resources on its website.

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

OBJECTIVE 3: *To provide oral language services through a diverse bilingual workforce, partnerships with immigrant and community-based agencies, and contracting with private resources as needed.* “Oral language services” means the provision of oral information necessary to enable limited or non-English proficiency families to access or participate in programs or services offered by PEAK.

Activity 3.1: PEAK services will include placement of bilingual staff in public contact positions; the provision of experienced and trained staff who speak the language of origin; 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: PEAK will include this provision in contracts or agreements with all sub-contractors that PEAK funds to carry out services to its public.

Activity 3.3: PEAK will ensure that all staff are aware of the policy that use of family members as interpreters is prohibited unless all other mechanisms have been exhausted such as in the case of 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: PEAK will have a minimum of one trained bilingual Parent Advisor that speak Spanish who are available to speak to non-English speaking families and will prioritize hiring of bilingual staff particularly in all outreach positions. PEAK will work with community-based and immigrant-serving organizations to assist in communicating with non-English speaking families. PEAK will pay bilingual staff for utilization of their oral and written language translation skills.

Activity 3.5: PEAK will inform 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: PEAK will inform LEP families that they may access simultaneous translation at workshops and statewide conference, and will contract with qualified,

trained interpreters to translate oral presentations simultaneously with the English language presentation using simultaneous translation equipment.

OBJECTIVE 4: *To enhance the capacity of PEAK staff to effectively provide language access to and serve LEP families.*

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

Activity 4.2: Designated PEAK bilingual and lead program staff will work with the Advisory Committee noted above to assess progress and oversee implementation of the Language Access Plan (LAP). The designated PEAK staff will report bi-monthly directly to the Executive Director who will provide feedback annually to the PEAK Board regarding PEAK's performance in implementing the LAP and revisions to the plan for the following year.

OBJECTIVE 5: *To conduct outreach activities that target LEP populations served or encountered by PEAK to inform them about services and programs offered by PEAK on an ongoing basis. These activities include providing LEP communities with information about PEAK's services and language access policy.*

Activity 5.1: PEAK will organize events in LEP communities including fairs, community meetings, and educational workshops in collaboration with community-based organizations.

Activity 5.2: PEAK will disseminate information through LEP media outlets including LEP TV, newspapers, and radio.

Activity 5.3: PEAK will routinely distribute flyers, brochures, and other printed material in non-English languages, particularly Spanish, by making materials available at community-based organizations serving LEP families such as immigrant organizations.

Activity 5.4: PEAK will identify and partner with immigrant and community-based organizations on key projects including co-hosting parent workshops focused on the rights of families.

Activity 5.5: PEAK will disseminate information about the rights of LEP families to have language access for services offered by government and other non-profit agencies.

Activity 5.6: PEAK will sponsor or participate 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 Parent Center

PEAK Parent Center'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.

 XX 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.

 XX 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.

 XX The plan includes an evaluation process that enables the Parent Center's Board, Executive Director, and Project Directors 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:

PEAK Parent Center Board President: _____ Date: _____

PEAK Parent Center Executive Director: _____ Date: _____

PTI Director: _____ Date: _____

Language Access Plan Implementation Budget

Currently expenses for services and activities noted above are embedded in project and agency budgets at PEAK Parent Center. Therefore, by January 31, 2012, PEAK Parent Center will break out these costs and create a specific Language Access & Services budget for LEP services using the categories noted below.

Language Access Plan Implementation Budget Categories

- Bilingual Staff Salary & Fringe
- Facilities for Bilingual Staff
- Supplies for Bilingual Staff
- Consultant
- Translation/Interpretation
- Printing of Bilingual Materials
- Postage for Bilingual Materials
- Traducelo Ahora
- Bilingual Trainer Stipends
- Mileage for Bilingual Staff
- Bilingual Staff
- Telecommunications
- Meeting & Conference
- Bilingual Services Evaluation
- Copier