Geneva Housing Authority

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) PLAN

**I. PLAN STATEMENT**

The Geneva Housing Authority (GHA) has adopted this plan to provide meaningful access to its programs and activities by persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In accordance with federal guidelines the GHA will make reasonable efforts to provide or arrange free language assistance for its LEP population, including applicants, recipients and/or persons eligible for public housing, Section 8/ Housing Choice Vouchers, homeownership and other GHA programs.

**II. MEANINGFUL ACCESS; FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Meaningful access is free language assistance in accordance with federal guidelines, especially the Final Guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The GHA will periodically assess and update the following four-factor analysis, including but not limited to:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the GHA.

2. The frequency with which with LEP persons using a particular language come into contact with the GHA.

3. The nature and importance of the GHA program, activity or service to the LEP person’s life.

4. The GHA’s resources and the cost of providing meaningful access. Reasonable steps may cease to be reasonable where the costs imposed substantially exceed the benefits.

**III. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE**

1. A person who does not speak English as his or her primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English may be a Limited English Proficient (LEP) person and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to GHA programs and activities.

2. Language assistance includes interpretation, which means oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language; and/or translation, which means the written transfer of a message from one language into another language. The GHA will determine when interpretation and/or translation are needed and are reasonable.

3. GHA staff will take reasonable steps to provide the opportunity for meaningful access to LEP clients who have difficulty communicating in English. If a person asks for language assistance and the GHA determines that the person is an LEP person and that language assistance is necessary to provide meaningful access, the GHA will make reasonable efforts to provide free language assistance. If reasonably possible the GHA will provide the language assistance in the LEP person’s preferred language.

The GHA has the discretion to determine whether language assistance is needed, and if so, the type of language assistance necessary to provide meaningful access. The GHA will periodically assess persons’ needs for language assistance based on requests for interpreters and/or translation, as well as the literacy skills of clients.

**4. Translation of Documents**

a. The GHA will weigh the costs and benefits of translating documents for potential LEP groups, considering the expense of translating the documents, the barriers to meaningful translation or interpretation of technical housing information, the likelihood of frequent changes in documents, the existence of multiple dialects within a single language group, the apparent literacy rate in an LEP group and other relevant factors. The GHA will undertake this examination when an eligible LEP group constitutes 10 percent of an eligible group (for example, 10 percent of households living in the GHA’s public housing) or 75 persons, whichever is less.

b. If the GHA determines that translation is necessary and appropriate, the GHA will translate the public housing lease and selected mailings and documents of vital importance into that language.

c. As opportunities arise, the GHA may work with other housing authorities to share the costs of translating common documents, which may include language groups which do not (yet) reach the threshold level in the GHA’s client population.

d. HUD should provide prototype translations of standard housing documents in multiple languages in a timely fashion. HUD should provide this service to local housing authorities and the hundreds or thousands of other HUD grantees whose limited resources hinder their LEP efforts.

e. The GHA will consider technological aids such as Internet-based translation services which may provide helpful, although perhaps not authoritative, translations of written materials.

**5. Audiovisual Materials**

The GHA will use reasonable efforts to obtain translations of audiovisual materials it uses to inform or educate applicants, residents and other groups (for example, a training video on housekeeping produced by others that has multiple language options).

**6. Formal Interpreters**

a. When necessary to provide meaningful access for LEP persons, the GHA will provide qualified interpreters, including GHA bilingual staff and contract vendors. At important stages that require one-on-one contact, written translation and verbal interpretation services will be provided consistent with the four-factor analysis set out above.

b. The GHA may require a formal interpreter to certify to the following:

i. The interpreter understood the matter communicated and rendered a competent interpretation, including legal or technical terms.

ii. The interpreter is aware of and subject to the LEP person’s privacy rights and will not disclose non-public data without written authorization from the LEP person.

c. Formal interpreters shall be used at the following:

i. Review hearing for denial of admission to public housing or for termination of Section 8 assistance, and for other grievance proceedings;

ii. Informal settlement conferences and formal hearing for termination of public housing;

iii. Hearings or conferences concerning denial or termination of Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) participation.

d. A GHA staff interpreter may not be a subordinate to the person making the decision in the hearings or conferences referred to in (c), above.

**7. Informal Interpreters**

a. Informal interpreters may include the family members, friends, legal guardians, service representatives or advocates of the LEP person. GHA staff will determine whether it is appropriate to rely on informal interpreters, depending upon the circumstances and subject matter of the communication. However in many circumstances, informal interpreters, especially children, are not competent to provide quality and accurate interpretations. There may be issues of confidentiality, competency or conflict of interest.

b. An LEP person may use an informal interpreter of his or her own choosing and expense, either in place of or as a supplement to the free language assistance offered by the GHA. If possible, the GHA should accommodate an LEP person’s request to use an informal interpreter in place of a formal interpreter.

c. If an LEP person prefers an informal interpreter, after the GHA has offered free interpreter services, the informal interpreter may interpret. In these cases the LEP person and the interpreter should sign a waiver of free interpreter services.

d. If an LEP person wants to use his or her own informal interpreter, the GHA reserves the right to also have a formal interpreter present.

**8. Outside Resources**

a. Outside resources may include community volunteers, GHA residents or Housing Choice Voucher/Section 8 participants.

b. Outside resources may be used for interpreting services at public or informal meetings or events if a timely request has been made.

c. The GHA will build relationships with organizations that assist specific cultural and ethnic groups living in Geneva. To help their clients obtain or keep housing assistance through the GHA, these organizations may provide qualified interpreters for LEP persons.

**VI. MONITORING**

1. The GHA will review and revise this LEP Plan from time to time. The review will include:

a. Reports from the GHA’s computerized data base on the number of affected persons who are LEP, to the extent that the software and staff data entry can provide such information. Such reports may be supplemented by staff observations.

b. Reports from the GHA’s computerized data base and other sources listing the languages used by LEP persons.

c. A determination as to whether 10 percent of households or 75 persons from a GHA group speak a specific language, which triggers consideration of document translation needs as described above.

d. Analysis of staff requests for contract interpreters: number of requests, languages requested, costs, etc.

2. The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) will be asked to review the LEP Plan annually as part of updating the Agency Plan.

3. An authoritative board, agency or entity, or person, will be asked annually to review texts written in or translated to other languages.

**VII. LEP PLAN DISTRIBUTION AND TRAINING**

The LEP Plan will be:

1. Distributed to all GHA Administrative Staff.

2. Available in GHA Management Offices.

3. Posted on GHA’s website, www.genevahousingauthority.org

4. Explained in orientation and training sessions for supervisors and other staff who need to communicate with LEP clients.

5. Presented to tenants, applicants and visitors by posting of signage in English and other language or languages in waiting rooms and common areas providing notice of translation or interpretation options; by placing language identification cards at reception areas so that persons can identify their primary language to receptionists and intake personnel; and striving to determine other ways to make LEP services available to interested persons.

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