



Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

To determine which individuals may have limited English proficiency, consider the following:

- English is not their primary language;
- They have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English;
- There has been a determination by that person of their need for language assistance.

It is important to note that it is the right of the individual, and therefore the individual, not an agency, determines the need for language access.

Those with limited English proficiency may have varying levels of language acquisition over time. A survivor with LEP, however, may have additional, abuse-specific challenges to learning English if the abuser has isolated her or denied her access to English classes.

Given the growing diversity and mobility of the US population, community-based programs and services such as sexual/domestic violence programs can benefit from building their capacities to engage with anyone in their communities whose preferred language is not English. Implementing a Language Access Plan—a proactive approach to assisting survivors who have limited English proficiency—reduces the number of language-access obstacles for survivors and advocates alike, makes the advocate’s job more efficient, and enhances outcomes for survivors. In addition to being the right thing to do, language accessibility is also legally required of federally-funded programs.