




Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager 
FROM: Dr. Danielle Walker, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer *DW*
FOR: Village President and Board of Trustees
DATE: January 23, 2024
SUBJECT: Language Access Accommodations for Village Board Meeting

The purpose of this memo is to provide the Board with an update regarding language access support that will be offered at the Village Board meeting on January 23, 2024.

Background

The Village of Oak Park has identified language access as a prioritized need for the community. The current humanitarian crisis involving the migrant community has further emphasized the need to be responsive to the language access needs for this Spanish speaking population.

Board Meeting Language Access Accommodations

Attendees:

In preparation for the Board meeting tonight, handheld translator devices and interpreters will be provided. There are several dozen handheld translator devices that will be available to any person in attendance at the Village Board Meeting tonight who needs interpretation support from English to Spanish or Spanish to English. These devices are configured for the Venezuelan Spanish dialect. Staff will be present to provide a bilingual reference guide to explain the key functionalities of the devices. There will also be an interpreter onsite to provide additional English to Spanish interpretation for asylum seekers who seek additional language access support.

Board Members:

The Board of Trustees, the Village Clerk, the Village Manager and the Village Attorney will be equipped with assisted listening devices to receive simultaneous interpretation from a second onsite interpreter for any public commentators who provide their comments in Spanish. Staff will assist Board members with equipping and activating listening devices in Room 101 after Executive Session adjourns.

Language Access Handheld Device Quick Tips

- Ensure the volume is turned off in settings
- Translation Button A is for people speaking in English
- Denoted by the color orange
- Translation Button B is for people speaking Spanish
- Denoted by the color green
- When Village staff and/or Board is speaking make sure to **hold down** the “Translation button A” for the duration of the communication. A microphone picture will show up to indicate that it is actively translating.
- Then release “Translation Button A” to see the translation in written text.
- Please try to limit side conversations to a minimize impacting the translation of the Board meeting.

Protocol for Communicating Through an Interpreter

- Speak slowly, clearly and in a normal tone of voice
- Speak directly to the English language learner person, not to the interpreter
- Be prepared to repeat yourself in different words if your message is not understood
- Speak in short simple sentences, pausing to permit the interpretation
- Avoid using slang, puns, idioms and humorous wordplay if possible when using an interpreter
- Most often, the translation or interpretation is not equivalent and can lead to confusion
- Only one person should be speaking when an interpreter is working, overlapping conversation cannot be interpreted effectively
- Enunciation and speaking clearly is important. Avoid contractions, words like ‘can’t’ can be easily misunderstood and are easily replaced with ‘cannot’
- Be patient with yourself as this is a learning process

Next Steps

Staff will continue to respond to current language access needs for the migrant population as identified. Additionally, staff will bring forth a Language Access policy to the Board in February of 2023.

The Village's timeline of events, official communications and other relevant information is available on the Village's [Assisting Asylum Seekers](#) webpage.

If you have any questions feel free to reach out to Dr. Danielle Walker at dwalker@oak-park.us or 708-358-5770.

cc: Lisa Shelly, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
Paul Stephanides, Village Attorney
Shatonya Johnson, Police Chief
Ron Kobyleski, Fire Chief
Joseph Terry, Deputy Fire Chief