

Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative

Language Access Plan to Ensure Effective Communication with Multilingual Students and Families



Section 1: Policy Directives

This section sets forth the laws, standards, and operating principles that govern the implementation of Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative's (CVSEC) language access plan across its program sites.

Policy Foundation

Federal

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- **Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA)** requires school districts to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers for students learning English.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** requires that evaluations, IEPs, and related services be conducted and provided in the family's home language using qualified interpreters — a requirement central to CVSEC's work as a special education cooperative.

State

- **Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32**
 - Subd. 1: Requires a language access plan beginning in 2025-26, adopted by the governing board at a regularly scheduled public hearing and included in the handbook.
 - Subd. 2: Requires trained or certified interpreters and family notifications.
 - Subd. 3: Requires biennial board review and updates.
- **LEAPS Act (2014)** promotes academic English proficiency, grade-level content knowledge, and multilingual skills.

Definitions

American Sign Language (ASL): A visually perceived language based on a naturally evolved system of articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body, along with non-manual markers such as facial expressions, head movements, shoulder raises, mouth morphemes, and movements of the body.

Relay: Telephone accessibility services to people who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or speech disabled.

Screen Reader: Software programs that allow blind or visually impaired users to read text displayed on a computer screen with a speech synthesizer or braille display.

Interpretation: The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language). The interpreter must retain the same meaning as the original message without omitting information, summarizing, or otherwise altering the message and without adding the interpreter's own thoughts or opinions.

Interpreter: A person who provides interpreting services.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment: Equipment that allows a group of people to listen through headsets to information interpreted into their primary language. Most appropriate for large group settings and meetings where multiple languages are being interpreted simultaneously.

Language Assistance Services: Oral, expressive, written, and technological supportive services that help students and families communicate effectively with staff. These services ensure students and families can participate fully in services, activities, and programs.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English, including writing, reading, speaking, and listening comprehension. Federal law uses this term to refer to intended beneficiaries of language access services.

Emergent Multilingual Speakers: Individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to communicate effectively in English but are in the process of developing English proficiency. Preferred term among language access industry leaders and advocates.

English Learner (EL): A status assigned to students whose primary language is not English, who lack the necessary skills to understand, speak, read, and write in English, but are receiving English language development instruction in a public school or charter setting.

Home Language: The language most commonly used in the home by members of a family, or the language parents use when speaking with their children.

Primary Language: An individual's native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.

Sight Translation: The oral interpretation of a written document, occurring when an interpreter reads a document and then provides a complete oral interpretation of its contents.

Remote Interpreting: Interpreting provided via telephone or video call.

Translator: A person who provides translation services.

Translation: The restating of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

Vital Document: Materials deemed vital to ensuring access to educational services, programs, and activities, or that contain information required by law to be translated or provided in audio format. For CVSEC, this includes evaluation reports, IEPs, procedural safeguards notices, and prior written notice.

Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice

CVSEC aligns with the Minnesota Department of Education's guidance on the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Language:

<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/div/el/>

Because CVSEC's interpretation and translation needs frequently arise in the context of special education evaluations, IEP meetings, and due process, CVSEC also references the National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care, which offers guidance applicable to sensitive family and evaluation-related communications:

<https://www.ncihc.org/ethics-and-standards-of-practice>

Section 2: The Plan

Overview

CVSEC's Language Access Plan outlines the cooperative's commitment to providing high-quality language access services for emergent multilingual students and families served through CVSEC programs (including ALEX, STEP, and SUN). This plan complies with federal and state requirements and serves as a roadmap for implementation, quality control, staff training, and ongoing evaluation.

Language Access Plan

Description of Services

CVSEC offers the following language assistance services in connection with evaluations, IEP development, and program services:

- Remote interpretation services (including video remote interpreting) for evaluation team meetings, IEP meetings, and family conferences
- Translation of vital documents, including evaluation reports, IEPs, procedural safeguards notices, prior written notice, and progress reports
- Access to contracted interpretation and translation vendors, including Language Line
- Access to Talking Points and language translation through JMC
- Access to relay services and screen readers
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation

Implementation

Oversight of this plan is led by the CVSEC Executive Director, in collaboration with:

- Cooperative Administration and Coordinators, ALEX, STEP, and SUN
- Special education case managers and evaluators

Coordination with community partners ensures services are available and effective. The Cooperative promotes language access services through handbooks, school websites, and at Cooperative events.

Identification and Assessment of Language Assistance Needs

Language preferences are identified through home language questionnaires completed at referral or enrollment, review of resident district student information records, and communication with families during the evaluation and IEP process. Needs are reassessed at each annual review and reevaluation, and are supported by collaboration with:

- ML/EL program data
- Community cultural organizations
- Enrollment and registration feedback

Timeline

- Summer 2026: Draft plan finalized and shared with school board
- Fall 2026 - Winter 2027: Staff training and procedural rollout begins
- Winter 2026-27: Plan incorporated into CVSEC website
- Ongoing: Full implementation across all CVSEC program sites
- 2028 and beyond: Biennial school board updates, per Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.32

Funding and Procurement

CVSEC budgets costs associated with interpretation and translation services through its operating budget. The Executive Director, in coordination with business office staff, reviews interpretation and translation expenditures annually as part of budget planning.

Notice of Services

Families will be informed about language assistance services:

- At the time of referral and during the enrollment process
- At IEP, evaluation meetings, and through the Student Handbook
- Through translated procedural safeguards notices, provided upon request
- On the CVSEC website
- In coordination with resident district enrollment

Training for Staff

- Annual staff training on procedures for accessing interpretation and translation services

- Role-specific training for evaluators, case managers, and program supervisors, with emphasis on IDEA's home-language requirements for evaluations and IEP meetings
- Resources shared via internal communication and professional development sessions

Plan Maintenance

- Reviewed every two years by CVSEC leadership
- Ongoing feedback collection from families and staff
- Periodic audits of translation and interpretation quality

Community Engagement and Partnership

CVSEC partners with:

- Regional MDE resources
- Southeast Service Cooperative resources

Emergency Communication Protocol

- Pre-scripted multilingual messages are available for common emergency scenarios
- JMC and Talking Points translate multilingual messages
- Interpretation services are available for follow-up calls to families
- Website alerts and social media posts with AI-assisted translation

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Translation Services

AI translation services (e.g., Google Translate) are used to:

- Translate general CVSEC communications and flyers
- Post multilingual web content
- Provide immediate, preliminary translation support for family text or email communication

Section 3: Procedures

Overview

This section sets forth guidelines and steps for CVSEC staff to coordinate, gather data, and deliver uniform language access services to students, families, and community members across all program sites and member districts.

Procedures

Telephone/In-Person Requests

- Staff coordinate with trained translators available through Language Line or a designated service provider

Tracking Language Preferences

- Home/primary language is recorded in the student's evaluation and IEP file and cross-referenced with JMC
- Case managers verify language preference annually at each review

Informing Individuals of Services

- Translated procedural safeguards notices and program materials available upon request
- Reminders provided at referral, evaluation, and IEP meetings

Identifying Language Needs

- Home Language Questionnaire

- Staff interviews with families
- Consultation with resident district ML/EL, special education, and mental health staff members

Correspondence Response

- Translation tools used for initial understanding of incoming correspondence
- Follow-up through contracted translators for written responses

Interpreter Procurement (In-Person/Remote)

- Coordinated through CVSEC-approved interpretation vendors
- Requests coordinated by case managers or Cooperative administration

Translation of Documents

- Documents prioritized based on legal requirements and family impact
- Review by qualified bilingual staff where available, prior to distribution

Language Access Complaints

- Directed to the CVSEC Executive Director
- Parental rights to appeal shared through procedural safeguards materials and the CVSEC website

Use of Professional Interpreters

- Required for evaluation team meetings, IEP meetings, discipline meetings, placement changes, and evaluation summaries

Role of Bilingual Staff

- May support document review for accuracy if qualified and trained
- Not authorized to interpret in formal evaluation, IEP, or due process meetings unless qualified and approved as an interpreter

Training and Monitoring

- Ongoing access to MDE-sponsored training
- Annual monitoring of language proficiency and service quality for staff

Contact Information

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Resources

- Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative Website
- [MDE Language Center](#)