



# **Supplementary Update**

## **Covering Fiscal Years 2024 – 2026**

### **Language Access Plan**

To Provide Language Services to Individuals  
with Limited English Proficiency

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## I. Introduction and Agency Background

The Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Civil Rights & Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement (CRL/OTE) office developed this biannual update to TSA's 2015 Language Access Plan. This update details TSA's ongoing language access programs and initiatives in accordance with Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (EO 13166). This plan is published on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) language access resources webpage at [www.dhs.gov/language-access](http://www.dhs.gov/language-access).

TSA, an agency under DHS, was established by Aviation and Transportation Security Act in 2001. TSA's mission is to protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement of people and commerce. TSA envisions itself to be an agile security agency, embodied by a professional workforce, that engages its partners and the American people to outmatch a dynamic threat.

## II. Key Terms

People who are Limited English Proficient: People who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. People who are LEP may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (e.g., reading or writing). LEP designations are also context-specific; an individual may possess sufficient English language skills to function in one setting, but these skills may be insufficient in other settings.

Meaningful Access: Meaningful access is the provision of language assistance services that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the person who is LEP. For people who are LEP, meaningful access indicates access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to people who are English proficient.

Vital Document: A vital document is a document that contains information that is critical for obtaining any aid, benefit, or services or is required by law. Vital documents can include applications, forms that require signatures, complaint forms, notices of rights, notices on the availability of free language assistance, and letters or notices that require a response from the beneficiary, customer, or noncitizen. TSA materials is a term specifically defined in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Section 2(a)(7), Division G, Title LXXI, Subtitle D, Section 7131 TSA Reaching Across Nationalities, Societies, and Languages to Advance Traveler Education (TRANSLATE) for fiscal year (FY) 2023 that includes, signs, videos, audio messages, websites, press releases, social media postings, and other communications published and disseminated by the Administrator of the TSA in major airports.

## III. Policy Statement

It is the policy of the DHS, and in turn TSA, to provide meaningful access for people with limited English proficient (LEP) to services, activities and programs designed for the public, by providing quality language assistance services in a timely manner. TSA recognizes its obligation to comply with EO 13166, including the development and updates of a TSA Language Access Plan, which follows the [DHS Language Access Plan](#). TSA also follows Section 508 accessibility guidelines when developing materials intended for the public.

#### **IV. Executive Summary**

TSA is committed to the core values of integrity, respect, and commitment. With more than 60,000 employees, TSA delivers public-facing security and customer experience programs and activities worldwide. More than 43,000 TSA Officers screen over 2.5 million passengers daily at approximately 440 federalized airports as travel has resumed since the pandemic. Additionally, there are approximately four million interactions with TSA PreCheck® application centers and online renewals each year, as well as the nearly two million inquiries from the public received by the TSA Contact Center (TCC) each year.

Since the last update, Congress has passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023. In Section 2(a)(7), Division G, Title LXXI, Subtitle D, Section 7131 TSA Reaching Across Nationalities, Societies, and Languages to Advance Traveler Education (TRANSLATE), Congress requires TSA to develop a plan to improve communication with the public at airport security checkpoints. The TSA TRANSLATE Plan, submitted to Congress in August 2023, is aligned with this TSA Language Access Plan and Supplementary Updates.

TSA continues to have in-person interactions at airport screening checkpoints and customer experience activities (e.g., TSA Contact Center inquiries, TSA PreCheck® enrollment activities, claims, and tsa.gov) continue to occur via telephone, the Internet, or electronic correspondence. As the primary Language Access Coordinator, Civil Rights and Liberties, Ombudsman, & Traveler Engagement (CRL/OTE) convened a working group of representatives from offices with public-facing services, activities, or programs to collect data and update the supplement. The working group is collecting requirements for expanding TSA's suite of language access solutions for the public and will provide notice to the workforce with each new capability.

#### **V. Language Access Plan Update – FY23-24**

##### **a. Checkpoint Interactions**

*Signage:* The first interaction that most travelers have with TSA is the signage in the queue leading up to the checkpoint, including certain required signage for the checkpoint. By this calendar year, TSA will have translated these into Spanish, and the

following additional languages: Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, German, and Punjabi.

*Written Checkpoint Advisements:* “Advisements” are simple instructions and guidance given to the public passing through airport security checkpoints, regarding removal of coats and shoes, or how to stand in the Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machine. Ten years ago, TSA’s Security Operations office had created a simple written and illustrated set of these advisements with translations into the following 25 languages: Arabic, Farsi, French, German, English, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Traditional Chinese, Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese, including a Braille version. In addition, there are flyers with illustrations and instructions, regarding removal of shoes and belts or “3-1-1” limits for liquids, gels, and aerosols, as well as the complete Prohibited Items List as it appears on <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/all>. Paper copies of these translated materials are assembled into a binder available at security screening checkpoints and is also digitally available to TSA personnel on the internal TSA network and may be printed or downloaded to any TSA-operated mobile technology.

While TSA has not conducted a formal evaluation of how frequently the written advisements are used, we do know that they are used regularly, and updates are being made this calendar year. These written advisements have the same information that is available on [tsa.gov](https://www.tsa.gov).

*Written and Verbal Checkpoint Security Advisements:* The Disability & Multicultural Branch worked with the Local Innovation For TSA (LIFT) Program to conduct a six month field test of a text-to-speech translation device. The test evaluated the viability of a small, stand-alone communication device for simple use at TSA checkpoints. The results were varied in the frequency and need of the device as it was dependent on the location, however, it was easy to use and effective in communicating with the traveling public. There was an overall positive impact on checkpoint operations.

The translation device that was tested had the same simple use and impact as the written advisements noted above. While useful for standard advisements on completing security screening and interactions at the checkpoint, this stand-alone translation device was insufficient for complex conversation. The translation device was not used for any communication that involved Personally Identifiable Information (PII) or Sensitive Security Information (SSI). Based on this field test, further technological solutions are being explored.

*Verbal Checkpoint Advisements:* TSA personnel have the opportunity, through a TSA program, to volunteer their self-certified basic language interpretation skills at checkpoints, when available. Language access volunteers are uniformed Transportation Security Officers, Lead Transportation Security Officers, and Supervisory Transportation Security Officers. These officers are highly informed and experienced in checkpoint screening procedures and use their non-English language or American Sign Language (ASL) abilities to communicate clearly, in plain language, with individuals undergoing security screening. The volunteer officers may wear nameplates identifying their skills, and TSA checkpoint personnel may request the assistance of these volunteer officers,

as available. The Security Operations Language Access Program training materials and the non-English language/ASL self-certification form are available to TSA personnel on the TSA's internal IT network. As above, the volunteered skills of the officers involve only non-PII, non-SSI guidance of travelers through the checkpoint. The purpose is, as always, identical to the interactions in English, e.g., please remove your shoes, please step this way, or please walk through.

## **b. TSA Contact Center**

The TSA Contact Center (TCC), managed by the Customer Experience Branch (CXB) within CRL/OTE, is the main contact point for the public. The TCC primarily receives airport screening-related questions, TSA Cares requests, inquiries and applications for traveler redress, Freedom of Information Act requests, and information about TSA PreCheck®, among other things.

The TCC has a general phone number (866-289-9673) that provides information in the introductory message that live assistance is available in English and Spanish. The TCC phone number also offers an automated Integrated Voice Response (IVR) system that provides information for frequently asked questions (FAQ) in English, Spanish, and the following 10 additional languages: Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, German, and Punjabi.

The TCC is now fully equipped to provide written responses translated into Spanish for over 500 questions and concerns. In addition, the TCC is working to include translations and interpretation in other languages besides Spanish, including top languages. TSA identified in its assessment of most common languages spoken at major airports (see Appendix A). Having this centralized resource for language access will further enhance TSA communications with LEP members of the public. TSA may be able to expand on the languages for the written responses to include the 10 other languages noted above.

## **c. Digital Interactions**

Outside of security screening checkpoints, TSA primarily communicates with the public through digital interactions. TSA's Strategic Communications and Public Affairs (SCPA) office implemented the AskTSA program, which has an automated virtual assistant available in English and Spanish for individuals who contact TSA over social media or by text.

TSA's public website, [tsa.gov](https://tsa.gov), is currently being translated into Spanish. However, web publishing the material will take this project past this calendar year. During the pandemic, TSA provided travel guidance in Spanish and Chinese (Simplified) on [tsa.gov](https://tsa.gov), Twitter, and press releases. All social media posts with photos are Section 508 compliant providing alternative text. Likewise, any videos posted online have captions with Section 508 compliant colors and fonts.

The Department of Homeland Security Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) recently translated their online resources, such as the frequently asked questions (FAQ) and the Traveler Inquiry Form, into Arabic, Chinese Simplified, French, Spanish, and Vietnamese. These translated documents can be requested via email. In addition, the TRIP website is being updated to have the documents made available online and the TRIP online portal is currently being translated into Arabic, German, Russian, Spanish, Chinese Simplified, Greek, Farsi, and Vietnamese by the end of this calendar year.

TSA's Precheck program will also have translated materials this calendar year. The languages are currently being selected.

#### **d. Written Interaction**

TSA's Chief Counsel's Office responds to personal injury and property damage claims from the public. Qualified translators are used to translate materials that are binding, involve recourse, or where miscommunication would have consequences on the agency or the person who communicates in a language other than English. The non-English languages that this program has encountered are Spanish, French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic.

#### **e. Credentialing**

The Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program (TWIC) and TSA PreCheck®, while different programs, both use the same contractor, MorphoTrust, to manage their programs and engage directly with the public. The most frequently encountered non-English language is Spanish. There were approximately 200 interactions and transactions in Spanish with TSA PreCheck® application centers and online renewal, and nearly 3,000 interactions and transactions in Spanish with the Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program (TWIC®) in the last year. The TSA PreCheck® program identifies program enrollments where the Spanish language option was selected by the customer as the preferred language. Also, enrolling applicants are allowed to bring an interpreter translator to assist during the enrollment process and at enrollment appointments. Enrollees can also receive assistance through a call center at 855-347-8371, where TSA customer service representatives can answer questions and are trained on the software to use the Spanish option for enrolling applicants. In addition, the call center provides Spanish speaking customer service representatives.

#### **f. Law Enforcement**

The Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS) continues to provide a language access toolkit to all Federal Air Marshals. The kit includes information about local embassies and contact points for language access. Federal Air Marshals may, in limited exigent circumstances, use online translation applications to communicate with people who are

LEP. In addition, Federal Air Marshals engage with airline personnel to receive in-flight interpretations if needed in the case of an emergency and until a qualified interpreter can be accessed.

#### **g. Innovation at TSA**

In Summer 2023, the Innovation Pipeline conducted a survey of airports and the barriers they face regarding language access in a fast-paced environment. The main conclusion was that airports are ripe for technological solutions that would improve communication for individuals who are limited English proficient and individuals with other communication barriers. CRL/OTE's collaboration with the Innovation Task Force and LIFT is moving this towards fruition.

TSA's Innovation Task Force solicited a language access solution for simple checkpoint communication through a Broad Agency Announcement from the commercial sector. Two possible technological solutions are being reviewed and may be tested in the field in the next two years. TSA is looking for accuracy, agility, and effectiveness in face-to-face interactions with the traveling public in a busy checkpoint environment.

#### **h. TSA Training**

CRL/OTE also engages, through its Disability & Multicultural Branch (DMB), with the Security Operations and Training and Development (T&D) offices to provide training for the workforce on effective communication with people who are LEP. Importantly, CRL/OTE and T&D have deployed the Public-Facing Interactions training, which is mandatory for all TSA employees on an annual basis. This training covers EO 13166 and how to comply with its requirements. Language access is one of the scenarios included in the training.

### **VI. Future language access priorities for Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026**

The future priorities for the next two fiscal years include the following:

- a. Continuing to adapt and modify communication tools (signage, in-person, web, etc.) as technology evolves.
- b. Consolidating language access resources to make it easier for users across the agency, both checkpoint and otherwise, to access them in a timely manner.
- c. Conducting a review and updating the current list (Appendix A) of the most common non-English languages used by individuals traveling through or working at major airports every five years, per the TRANSLATE Plan.
- d. Creating training protocols on providing language services to the public, including identifying the language needed and accessing the tools available.
- e. Creating an agency-wide data tracking system on collecting and managing language access needs, requirements, and resources



- f. Continuing to ensure assurances related to language access requirements under Executive Order 13166 are incorporated into all contractual documents.
- g. Continuing to provide notice to members of the public about availability of language services and expanding the various types of media to deliver TSA materials, including physical signs, videos, audio and digital messages, websites, press releases/statements, social media posts, and other communications products.
- h. Investigating the accuracy, agility, and effectiveness of mobile translation and interpretation technology at the checkpoints for simple communication with the traveling public.
- i. Further exploring, through public and private partnerships with air carriers and airport operators, ways to leverage evolving commercial-off-the-shelf products that have demonstrated the capability to communicate real-time information in various languages with the traveling public.
- j. Working to provide equal opportunity and REAL ID notices to the public in Spanish and may be able to expand to the following 10 additional languages: Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, French, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, German, and Punjabi, ideally this calendar year.

## **VII. Monitoring and Evaluation**

TSA monitors the provision of language access services through external feedback from the public via the TSA Contact Center, and through informal internal feedback from the field, e.g., regarding the use of and requests to update the translated written advisements. As TSA establishes the use of translation and interpretation technology, monitoring and evaluation may include data provided by vendors and further periodic self-assessments.

## **VIII. Contact Information**

The public may contact TSA by visiting <https://www.tsa.gov/contact/customer-service>, which includes information about AskTSA, how to submit a request or file a complaint online, and the phone number for TSA's Contact Center at (866) 289-9673.

Complaints about language access in TSA programs and activities with the Department of Homeland Security may be filed at <https://www.dhs.gov/file-civil-rights-complaint>.