

The PATH Project POLICY FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS, CULTURAL COMPETENCE, & DISABILITY ACCESS

The PATH Project ensures equitable access to and participation in its activities for all Texas families, with special attention paid to ensuring access for the most underserved families due to poverty, disability, race, color, language, ethnicity, immigrant status or national origin, gender, or age. The PATH Project's mission embodies a focus on families of children with special needs, particularly traditionally underserved families and at risk children and youth. "Our mission is to *empower* parents of children and youth with disabilities in their roles as parents, decision makers, and advocates for their children. We encourage parents and professionals to work together as PARTNERS and to focus on cooperation and collaboration." The PATH Project is committed to making services meaningful and accessible despite barriers of disability, income, race, ethnicity, sex, language, immigrant status, foster care, homelessness, and other special circumstances." The PATH Project offices and services encompass the northern, central, and southeastern areas of Texas. This vast, geographic area is a blend of urban, suburban, and rural communities. The goal of The PATH Project is to promote partnerships **throughout** the state among parents, professionals, parent organizations, school districts, and service agencies through collaboration with the various educational, community-based, social service, state and federal entities. The PATH Project's state office is located in Beaumont, Texas, with regional coordinators servicing 9 of the 20 Texas Education Agency designated ESC areas. Major cities in those areas include Austin, Waco, Fort Worth, Wichita Falls, Dallas, College State, Tyler, Texarkana, and Beaumont. It is estimated that over 50% of all children receiving special education services in the state reside in the PATH Project area.

The PATH Project is committed to engaging families from all communities throughout the project area. Trainings and materials are provided in Spanish and translation services for multiple languages are available at no cost to parents. All project activities are located in accessible buildings and in areas that can be reached by public transportation. Parents are encouraged and supported to participate regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, religion, or language.

Responsible Parties:

All members of the PATH Project team in collaboration with Partner's Resource Network Management team are expected to coordinate activities and provide services as appropriate to families whose primary language is one other than English. Accessibility services including translation and interpretation are provided at the family's request or as reasonably indicated and are offered at no cost to the family.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVE 1:

To assess family language access needs and ensure the project's capacity to meet those needs on an ongoing basis.

Activity 1.1: The PATH Project will collect unduplicated data by "language spoken" via service tracking which is calculated on a monthly basis. Collected data will be reviewed by the Project Director and Management team on a regular basis for planning, budgeting, and development and implementation of annual Language Access plans.

Activity 1.3: The PATH Project will obtain feedback of LEP families regarding the effectiveness of its training and technical assistance via workshop evaluation forms and by ensuring LEP families are part of the pool of families contacted for quarterly quality assurance phone calls and/or mailings.

OBJECTIVE 2:

To translate curriculum and other high-demand, widely used materials such as newsletters and factsheets, into the LEP languages largely served by the project.

Activity 2.1: The PATH Project staff will conduct an annual review of all training and educational materials, to identify documents that should be translated because they are in high demand and widely used across the project. Project management team will prioritize documents and develop timelines for this to occur..

Activity 2.2: The PATH Project will utilize professional community organizations, bilingual employees and parents to assist with translation including the assessment of the quality and accuracy of translated material. For languages for which the project does not have bilingual staff with the qualifications or capacity to translate written materials, the project will contract with professional translation services with expertise in written translation to translate materials.

Activity 2.3: The PATH Project will make translated materials available to the public through our website, offices, regional coordinators, email and by telephone request.

OBJECTIVE 3:

To provide oral language services through a diverse bilingual workforce, partnerships with community agencies, and regionally contracted services on an ongoing basis. .

Activity 3.1: The PATH Project will provide direct access to language services in Spanish by referral to bilingual staff proficient in translation and interpretation of Spanish. Other language services will be provided through community organizations and regionally developed contracts for language and translation services.

Activity 3.2: The PATH Project will provide funding for the development of regional contracts with vendors who provide translation and interpretation services.

Activity 3.3: The PATH Project will ensure that all staff are aware of its policy that use of family members as interpreters is limited to initial contact and that appropriate language services should be put into action prior to any further provision of services.

Activity 3.5: The PATH Project staff will inform LEP families of the availability of language assistance via its website as well as a recorded message in Spanish on its answering machine attached to its toll-free number.

Activity 3.6: The PATH Project staff will inform LEP families that they may access simultaneous translation at workshops, mini-conferences, and statewide conferences, and contracts with qualified, trained interpreters to translate oral presentations simultaneously with the English language presentation using simultaneous translation equipment that the project has purchased.

OBJECTIVE 4:

To enhance the capacity of the PATH Project staff to effectively provide language access to and serve LEP families.

Activity 4.1: The PATH Project staff will review the project's LEP Access policy each year. Discussion will include how to access and utilize the materials and services the project has made available to LEP families.

OBJECTIVE 5:

To conduct outreach activities that target LEP populations served or encountered by the PATH Project on an ongoing basis.

Activity 5.1: The PATH Project will organize activities in LEP communities including fairs, community meetings, educational workshops, etc., in collaboration with community-based organizations

Activity 5.2: The Path Project will outreach LEP population utilizing media outlets which broadcast in languages other than English including TV, newspapers, and radio.