



Rhode Island State Police

General Order - 55D

<i>Section</i>	Law Enforcement Operations – Field Operations
<i>Article</i>	55 – Communications
<i>Title</i>	Managing Communication Barriers
<i>Special Instructions</i>	

I. PURPOSE

1.2.3a,b The purpose of this General Order is to recognize the importance of effective and accurate communication with all people in the community we serve. Communication barriers can impede effective and accurate communication in many ways and may inhibit or prohibit individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), those who are deaf/hard of hearing and those who are blind/vision impaired from accessing and/or understanding their rights, obligations, and available services. Limited ability to communicate with LEP, deaf/hard of hearing, or blind/visually impaired victims, witnesses, alleged perpetrators, and members of the public can present safety, evidentiary, and ethical challenges for all Division personnel.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **PRIMARY LANGUAGE** – an individual’s native tongue or the language in which an individual most effectively communicates.
- B. **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)** – designates individuals whose primary language is not English and who have limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in certain forms of communication (e.g. speaking) while LEP in other forms (e.g. reading or writing).
- C. **BILINGUAL** – the ability to use two languages proficiently.
- D. **COMMUNICATION AIDS** – auxiliary aid and services which are used to communicate with people who are deaf/hard of hearing. These include the use of gestures, visual aids, a TTY (teletypewriter), or TDD (telecommunications device for deaf people), pen and paper, or the use of a qualified oral interpreter for those who speech or lip read, or a qualified sign language interpreter for those whose primary language is sign language.
- E. **LANGUAGE LINE SERVICES** – over-the-phone 24-hour interpretation service that provides translations in over 170 languages to assist in the provision of meaningful service to Limited English Speaking (LEP) individuals.

III. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Rhode Island State Police to take reasonable steps to provide timely, meaningful access to LEP, deaf/hard of hearing, and blind/vision impaired members of our community to all services and programs provided by the Division. Personnel will provide or ensure that assistance is obtained in providing communication services free of charge to LEP, deaf/hard of hearing, and blind/vision impaired members of the public when obvious communication barriers exist and/or if the individual request communication assistance.

IV. PROCEDURES

1.2.3a,b A. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Personnel are encouraged to request the assistance of a bilingual member, when available, to ensure accurate communication. Personnel are encouraged to use the Language Line Services if a bilingual member is unavailable or any time they are in immediate need of assistance, such as with incoming phone calls from LEP individuals. When exigent circumstances exist, personnel are to use the most reliable interpreter available.

Personnel should be mindful that using friends, family members, bystanders or detainees to interpret could result in a breach of confidentiality, a conflict of interest, or inadequate or inaccurate interpretation. Personnel should attempt to avoid using minor children as interpreters. Once exigency has passed, personnel should utilize bilingual members, the Language Line Services or other available interpreters for communications with LEP individuals.

B. REQUESTING INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR "LEP" INDIVIDUALS.

1. Personnel in need of interpretation will;
 - a) Attempt to identify the LEP individual's primary language or language of preference through the use of the Language Line Services Language Identification Card or by contacting the Language Line for assistance. All employees of the Division have access to the Language Line Services.
2. To access the Language Line when face-to-face with a LEP individual, personnel will;
 - a) Dial either the emergency or routine number, as the situation determines, which is found on the Language Line Quick Reference Card (800 752-6096).
3. Personnel will advise the operator of:

- a) The language needed;
 - b) The **Client ID Number**, which is **#928015**;
 - c) The organization's name; and,
 - d) Sworn Member's Badge Number [Civilian personnel will use Badge #800].
4. If the language is not known, then Language Line Services will initiate a language identification process. In most cases, an interpreter is available within 25 seconds.
 5. The operator may place you on hold while connecting to an interpreter.
 6. When the interpreter joins the conversation, personnel should provide any special instructions and explain the communication method he/she will be using (e.g. passing the handset back and forth, using a speakerphone, using an extension handset, etc.). Avoid slang, jargon, acronyms or technical terms that may not interpret well into other languages and cultures and may require more time to interpret.
 7. When the call is complete, advise the interpreter by stating "End of call."

C. RECEIVING A TELEPHONE CALL FROM A "LEP" INDIVIDUAL

1. Personnel receiving a telephone call from an LEP individual will;
 - a) Place him/her on hold and dial Language Line Services.
 - b) Provide the necessary information.
 - c) Advise Language Line Services that you need to initiate the language identification process if you cannot determine the language needed.
 - d) Add the LEP individual onto the line and wait for the interpreter conferencing.
 - e) When the call is complete, advise the interpreter by stating "End of call."

D. REQUESTING INTERPRETATION SERVICES FOR DEAF/HARD OF HEARING

1. Personnel in need of interpretation for the deaf/hard of hearing will;
 - a) Attempt to identify the individual's preferred method of communication through writing.

2. Personnel may be advised that the individual can speech/lip read or that a sign language interpreter is needed. Every attempt should be made to communicate in the requested method; however, if there is another equally effective way of communicating, given the circumstances, length, complexity, and importance of the communication, then personnel may choose to attempt an alternate method.
 - a) The use of sign language interpretation services and/or auxiliary aids for hearing impaired persons shall be mandated by procedures and provisions of General Order 55C entitled, "*Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service and Auxiliary.*"
3. If an oral interpreter or sign language interpreter is requested, personnel should attempt to obtain information as to which language is used prior to determining if an interpreter is available – the most common are American Sign Language or Signed English.

F. COMMUNICATING WITH INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND/VISUALLY IMPAIRED

1. Individuals who are blind/visually impaired may also present a communication barrier challenge causing ineffective or inaccurate communication.
2. Visual impairment to blindness is on a spectrum. Personnel may encounter individuals who are partially sighted to completely blind. Required or requested services may vary depending on the individual's abilities.
3. When encountering a person who is blind/visually impaired personnel shall;
 - a) Identify themselves.
 - b) Make sure the individual with the sight impairment knows that you are speaking to him/her. You may touch them lightly on the arm or shoulder, if needed, to gain their attention.
 - c) Tell the individual what you intend to do before you do it, if possible.
 - d) Read aloud completely any documents you may refer to during the encounter.
4. If requested to lead an individual with a sight impairment, personnel shall;
 - a) Allow the individual to grasp your arm just above the elbow.

- b) Walk slightly in front of the individual.
 - c) Stop completely before going up or down stairs or curbs.
 - d) When entering a doorway, advise the individual which direction the door opens.
 - e) Never grasp an individual who is blind/visually impaired by the arm to lead them.
 - f) Offer to assist, but do not insist.
 - g) Follow the individual's instructions.
5. When a Service Animal is in use, personnel shall;
- a) Never pat or interfere with the service animal.
 - b) Never separate the service animal from its owner.
6. If it becomes necessary to arrest a service animal's owner, if possible, ask the individual who they would like to care for the animal, contact that person, and arrange for the service animal to be placed in their care.

F. TRANSLATED DOCUMENTS

- 1. Vital Documents – Documents deemed to be vital by the Officer-In-Charge of the Division's Inspectional Services Unit or his/her designee will be translated into languages designated by the Officer-In-Charge of the Inspectional Services Unit or his/her designee.
- 2. All translated vital documents will be available to all Division members.
- 3. Non-Vital Documents – Requests for translation of non-vital documents must be made to the Accreditation Unit.

V. PROVISIONS

- A. OFFICE TROOPER – Division members will notify the office trooper, whenever practical, when encountering individuals in need of communication assistance. The office trooper will make a notation on the day sheet and/or CAD system of the type of communication assistance requested and/or rendered.
- B. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS UNIT – The Officer-In-Charge of the Professional Standards Unit will track all formal/informal complaints involving language barriers.

- C. INSPECTIONAL SERVICES UNIT – The Officer-In-Charge of the Inspectional Services Unit, or his/her designee, will act as the Language Access Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating all aspects of services offered by the Division to LEP individuals or individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing or blind/visually impaired.



By Order of Colonel O'Donnell

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steven G. O'Donnell".

Steven G. O'Donnell
Colonel
Superintendent