



Newport News Police Department - Administrative Manual

ADM-161 - LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY & HEARING IMPAIRMENT COMMUNICATION

Amends/Supersedes: NEW

Date of Issue: 05/15/2023

I. GENERAL

- A. The Newport News Police Department provides access to law enforcement services regardless of a person's communication ability. According to U.S. Census data, approximately 6% of Newport News households report limited proficiency with English, and approximately 3% of the population reported a hearing impairment. A reduced ability to communicate with individuals needing law enforcement services can significantly negatively impact investigations and overall public safety.
- B. Department members will take reasonable steps to effectively communicate with members of the public, which may require interpretation for people who have difficulty speaking, understanding, or writing in English and those who are hearing or speech impaired.
- C. As the department cannot maintain in-person interpreters at all times for those with limited English proficiency or hearing/speech impairments, NNPD will take reasonable steps to make such services available to employees through a contracted vendor or State-approved service. The Communications Division maintains technology and directives to address procedures specific to the 911 Center (see [COM-315 Telecommunications Device for the Deaf \(TDD\)](#) and [COM-330 Over the Telephone Language Interpretation Service](#)).

II. PROCEDURES

A. Interpretation Services

- 1. When an employee encounters an individual with limited English proficiency and is unable to communicate in the language spoken, they will identify the language spoken either phonetically or by asking the person to select the language from a language identification [guide](#) or [flyer](#).
- 2. When an employee encounters a [deaf or hard-of-hearing](#) individual, the employee will first try to communicate in writing to determine the appropriate language.
- 3. If an employee fluent in the language needed is available, they may act as an interpreter. Non-sworn employees will not respond to an active scene unless the scene commander approves.
- 4. Friends, family, and bystanders should not serve as interpreters except to provide basic information during emergencies. Once a situation stabilizes and basic information is obtained, officers will transition to an employee or contracted interpreter. Non-law enforcement interpreters, such as advocates, attorneys, clinicians, or other professional support services, may serve as interpreters so long as there are no conflicts of interest, confidentiality issues, or risk of compromising an investigation.
- 5. If an employee interpreter is unavailable or a non-law enforcement interpreter is inappropriate, employees will utilize the [contracted service provider](#) for over-the-phone interpretation and, if needed, remote video interpretation with American Sign Language.
- 6. If the contracted service provider is unable to provide services, officers may utilize their City issued phone to access a translation app. In these circumstances, officers should not conduct detailed interviews. They should collect basic information and conduct a more extensive interview with an interpreter as soon as possible. If the case is likely assigned to an investigator, the officer

should email the appropriate investigative supervisor and inform them that the individual will need an interpreter. That supervisor will notify the assigned investigator of the need.

7. When presenting someone with limited English proficiency with a form that needs to be filled out, the preference is to provide them with a form in their primary language whenever available. If a form in their primary language is unavailable or the individual cannot read it, the interpreter will convey it in the appropriate language.

B. Documentation

1. Officers will record language interpretation activities for criminal cases and preserve the recordings following procedures in [OPS-485 Property & Evidence](#) and [ADM-570 Body-worn Cameras](#). When remote interpretation, officers will make every effort to ensure they capture all individuals involved.
2. Upon request of a Commonwealth Attorney or, if they deem it appropriate, a case agent will submit a request through their chain of command to have the contracted service provider complete transcript in both English and the language spoken during the interpretation.

C. Complaint Procedures

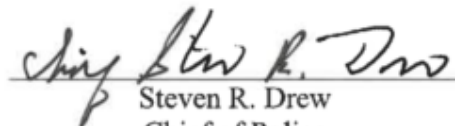
1. All complaints against the department or any department member made by individuals with limited English proficiency or hearing/speech impairments will be immediately forwarded to the Internal Affairs Division (IAD). Once it is determined that an individual wishes to make a complaint, they will be provided IAD's contact information and referred to the department's online complaint filing form, which is available in Spanish.

NOTE: This is an approved departure from procedures established in [ADM-260 Receipt of Complaints](#).

2. IAD staff will utilize the contracted service provider for interpretation services and provide written documents and communications in the complainant's primary language.
3. IAD will follow up on any complaints regarding a failure to provide interpretation services according to policy.

D. Translation Services

1. Certain documents may require translation, particularly documents that advertise services, explain the complaint process, or document a victim/witness/suspect's statements.
2. The Planning & Research Office and/or Public Information Office is responsible for processing requests to translate documents, forms, or web content. Documents that need translation will be submitted to the contracted service provider or another approved and credentialed service.


Steven R. Drew
Chief of Police