

# Oversight of Multilingual Access Services: Unemployment Insurance

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Annual Report to the Legislature

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## Purpose

In accordance with Section 316, Division 1, Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 1 of the California Unemployment Insurance Code (CUIC) as amended by Assembly Bill (AB) 138 and in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code, the Employment Development Department (EDD) is pleased to provide the report to the Legislature regarding language accessibility efforts in the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program from January 2022 – December 2022.

## Language Preference Identification

The EDD administers multiple benefit programs for Californians, including the UI program. The UI program provides temporary and partial wage replacement for those who are unemployed through no fault of their own. To anticipate the language needs of claimants, the EDD captures language preferences at the initial unemployment claim filing stage and maintains it throughout the life of the claim. The EDD has developed and implemented processes for capturing UI claimants' spoken and written language preferences through its online application portal and paper applications. The paper application allows write-in preferences for the applicant's spoken and written language. The online claim filing application offers a drop-down menu of 52 spoken and signed languages.

A statement on the early identification and recording of spoken language preferences for UI claimants was added to the EDD website on April 18, 2022. This section of the website also features contact information for in-language assistance.

The EDD also continues to add resources to our language access webpages as forms and publications are translated into different languages:

- The Language Resources tab appears at the top of every [EDD webpage](#), which provides a menu of language links that customers can click on to access all currently available translated program information, contact information, and forms and publications in different languages.
- The [Language Resources](#) link on the homepage shows the Language Resources information in English with links to the different language pages to assist English speakers in guiding LEP customers with information they need on EDD programs and services.

## Language Access Office

A new EDD Language Access Office was established in 2022. Led by the Language Access Officer and consisting of four staff members, the office is tasked with implementing the following language accessibility efforts:

- Develop and/or review language accessibility policies and procedures to ensure equal access to the Department's services and programs, including programs administered by the UI, Disability Insurance, Tax, Workforce Services, Legislative Affairs, Administration, and the Information Technology Branches.
- Conduct research, data analysis and monitoring to determine the Department's accessibility needs to comply with federal and state laws and develop and implement plans to address identified language access needs, including new language access services required by AB 138 and its Language Access Plan.
- Lead the Department's community engagement activities with Limited English proficiency (LEP) communities to solicit their feedback.
- Vet the Department's language access policies and practices and effectively promote the Department's programs with targeted communities.
- Lead the creation and implementation of a Multilingual Access Advisory Committee, comprised of community stakeholders and oversee and administer a \$2 million community-based organization (CBO) grant program to fund multilingual outreach and education activities.
- Lead the Department's Language Access Task Force and engage with key state agencies and federal stakeholders on matters related to language accessibility.

- Provide technical assistance and develop staff trainings and other educational activities to expand and ensure culturally appropriate interpretive and translation services and projects across the Department.
- Develop reports required by the Legislature on the status of the Department's multilingual access services and other activities, respond to legislative inquiries, and assist in the Department's communications and public engagement activities.
- Provide oversight related to providing appropriate language access, including interpretation, translation, and multilingual web content services as required by state law.

## Real-time Language Assistance

Given that currently, most LEP individuals access EDD services, benefits, and information by phone, special emphasis has been placed on telephonic language assistance. Prior to December 2022, EDD's unemployment insurance program provided dedicated language phone lines, staffed by bilingual EDD staff, in Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. Effective November 30, 2022, additional language phone lines were established in Tagalog, Korean, and Armenian. This effort enables speakers of the respective languages to contact the EDD and receive claim assistance from an EDD bilingual agent in real time.

To ensure the language lines serve speakers of the targeted language, customers will be greeted in the target language when calling a dedicated language phone line and provided an informational message in both the target language and English, indicating to customers that the phone line they have called is for the targeted language speakers only. The informational message asks the caller to hang up and call the main unemployment insurance phone line if they do not speak the target language.

For claim assistance in other languages, LEP callers may request an interpreter in their preferred language from any EDD agent at no cost. Through a professional third-party interpretive services contractor that provides translation services in over 100 languages, the agent will assist the caller in real time. If EDD cannot obtain interpretive services in the claimant's preferred language or linguistic variant in real time after good faith efforts to acquire language services, the EDD will ensure that the claimant receives a return telephone or relay call in the requested language or linguistic variant within a reasonable timeframe. In the event additional time is required to secure and convey language services, the additional time period will not be counted against an applicable claimant's deadlines to respond to EDD notifications.

Through the usage of bilingual staff or interpretive services contracts, LEP callers may request to have documents read to them in their preferred spoken language and request translation of vital unemployment insurance documents in their preferred written language.

## Policies and Procedures

Several policies and procedures have been developed and implemented to ensure consistent application of the EDD's language accessibility initiatives. These policies and procedures include:

- Mandatory training for all public contact employees and their supervisors.
- Language assistance requirements procedures (including accessing interpretive services and accessing translated documents).
- Detailed public contact staff instructions for accessing language services provided by external contractors.
- Procedures for redirecting calls from dedicated language (i.e., Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, and Armenian) phone lines to the main unemployment insurance phone line when callers do not speak the language of the respective dedicated language phone line.

## Community Outreach

In July 2022, the EDD announced the awarding of \$2 million for a two-year grant to 11 CBOs throughout California to help limited English-speaking and the deaf and hard of hearing communities to better access unemployment insurance and other EDD services and benefits. The program builds on the critical services provided by CBOs during the pandemic to reach limited-English-speaking adult Californians through trusted messengers with deep roots in their communities.

The EDD has solicited feedback from language advocates regarding efforts to communicate effectively with LEP communities. In addition, press releases announced expanded online language resources. These press releases include [“Employment Development Department Joins Communities Across California to Strengthen Multilingual Service”](#) (translated into several languages) (February 28, 2022), [“EDD Further Expands Language Translations and Resources to Aid Customers”](#) (April 22, 2022), and [“Employment Development Department Launches Enhancements to the Unemployment Insurance Program”](#) (December 8, 2022).

In addition, social media marketing and digital advertising regarding the availability of assistance in multiple languages were conducted in the top seven non-English Languages.

## Data Collection and Monitoring

The EDD continues to identify data collection and monitoring strategies to effectively evaluate the provision of language accessibility services at EDD. When the Language Access Office is fully staffed, robust metrics will be carefully researched and implemented to ensure continued success in oversight and monitoring activities. To date, the EDD is actively collecting and monitoring the following:

- Language preferences of UI claimants, including which language services for qualified interpreters were requested and provided by Third Party Vendors.
- Phone usage by UI claimants by spoken language, including, the following:
  - Unique Callers, total calls, unanswered calls, calls answered, and disconnections or dropped calls.
  - Weekly average call volumes on each dedicated language line, as well as grand totals for 2022.

The attachment shows metrics from January 2022 – December 2022 for each of the phone usage categories for UI claimants that are specified above.

## Conclusion

The EDD’s commitment to demonstrating significant improvements and enhancements in language accessibility supports our mission to strengthen California’s economic growth by delivering valuable and innovative benefits and services to workers.



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Governor  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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