

Bulletin

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LEP Language Assistance Services Expanded at Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has entered into a voluntary resolution agreement to expand language assistance services for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children's Services (MDHS-DFCS). MDHS-DFCS is the state agency responsible for five social welfare programs providing services throughout Mississippi to more than 137,000 individuals.

Under the agreement, MDHS-DFCS will take critical steps to ensure persons with LEP have meaningful access to its services, activities and programs, including foster care and adoption services, child protective services, abuse prevention services, child visitation, and the family reunification planning process.

MDHS-DFCS has agreed to implement a variety of corrective actions, including the establishment and implementation of policies for professional interpreters and translated documents; designation of a language assistance coordinator; posting of signs stating that interpreter services are available free of charge; and conducting employee training.

The agreement resolves an OCR compliance review and complaint investigation, conducted to determine whether MDHS-DFCS provided persons with LEP meaningful access to their programs in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI). Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. In many cases, failure to provide adequate language assistance services at no cost to ensure persons with LEP can access critical services is a form of national origin discrimination and a violation of Title VI.

The scope of this agreement is significant because it involves statewide human services programs that cover a wide variety of critical services. The obligations under this agreement help provide other state human services agencies guidance on affirmative steps that can be taken to ensure persons with LEP have meaningful access to a variety of services in compliance with Title VI.

A copy of the voluntary resolution agreement may be found at:
<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/activities/agreements/index.html>.

To learn more about non-discrimination and health information privacy laws, your civil right and privacy rights in health care and human service settings, and to find information on filing a complaint, visit us at www.HHS.gov/OCR.