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Bill Lann Lee  
U.S. Department of Justice

TO:

Agency Heads

FOR SIGNATURE OF :

\*\* GRN \*\*

CRC NO: 00-0547

Little, SBCR

DESC:

ROUTING:

Executive Orders on Civil Rights Enforcement  
(E.O. 13160 and E.O. 13166)

Travers  
Paperiello  
Miraglia  
Norry  
Craig  
Burns  
Bird, HR  
Cyr, OGC

DATE: 08/28/00

ASSIGNED TO:

CONTACT:

SBCR

Little

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS OR REMARKS:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL TICKET

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U. S. Department of Justice

Civil Rights Division

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

August 17, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR: HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, GENERAL COUNSELS  
AND CIVIL RIGHTS DIRECTORS

FROM: BILL LANN LEE *BL/SL*  
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL  
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE ORDERS ON CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT

President Clinton recently issued two Executive Orders affecting civil rights requirements with respect to federally conducted and federally assisted programs or activities. I am writing to alert you to both of these important Orders. The Attorney General, through the Civil Rights Division, has implementation responsibilities under both Executive Orders.

I. Executive Order 13160

On June 23, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13160 entitled "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs." A copy of the Executive Order is enclosed for your reference and is available on the Civil Rights Division's website at <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor>. The Division's Coordination and Review Section is responsible for developing a Guidance Document for this Executive Order, which will address a number of issues including covered programs, examples of discriminatory conduct, applicable legal principles, enforcement procedures, remedies, and reporting requirements for federal agencies. Note that this Executive Order applies only to federally conducted education and training programs. When the Guidance Document is completed, we will forward it to you to assist in your implementation of Executive Order 13160.

II. Executive Order 13166

On August 11, 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13166 entitled "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The purpose of this Executive Order is to eliminate to the maximum extent possible limited English proficiency (LEP) as an artificial barrier to full and meaningful participation by beneficiaries in all federally assisted and federally conducted programs and activities. A copy of the Executive Order is enclosed for your reference and is also available at the above website.

In order to ensure accomplishment of its goals, Executive Order 13166 requires the development, within 120 days, of either one or two implementation documents by each federal department or agency, depending on whether your agency grants federal financial assistance. These documents must be created with input from stakeholders. Both documents are to be consistent with the Department of Justice Guidance entitled "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency" (LEP Guidance) issued contemporaneously with the Executive Order. A copy of the LEP Guidance is enclosed, and is available on the Division's website at the address indicated above.

A. *Federally Conducted Programs and Activities.* All agencies must develop a plan with respect to their federally conducted programs or activities. The plan must be consistent with the LEP Guidance and must include steps the agency will take to ensure meaningful access to each agency's federally conducted programs or activities by eligible LEP persons. Once finalized, each agency's plan is to be filed with the Department of Justice in its capacity as the central repository for all federal LEP plans.

B. *Federally Assisted Programs and Activities.* Those federal agencies that provide federal financial assistance must also prepare an agency-specific LEP guidance document for their recipients. This guidance should be specifically tailored to the agency and will detail how the general standards in the LEP Guidance will be applied to the agency's recipients. This agency-specific guidance is subject to Department of Justice review and approval, and the Department of Justice, through the Division's Coordination and Review Section, is available to consult with agencies as they develop their guidance. Later this month, the Department of Health and Human Services will issue its agency-specific guidance, which can be used as an example of how one agency applied the standards to its programs.

The Executive Order states that both your final LEP plan for federally conducted activities and your draft agency-specific guidance (if applicable) should be submitted to the Department within 120 days of

the Executive Order or by December 11, 2000. Please direct these documents to Merrily Friedlander, Chief, Coordination and Review Section, Civil Rights Division, P.O. Box 66560, Washington, D.C. 20035-6560.

In order to assist us, we would appreciate your returning the enclosed LEP contact form as soon as possible. While a form is provided to each addressee of this memorandum, only one contact and alternate should be designated for each agency. Should you have any questions, please contact either COR staff attorney Christine Stoneman at (202)616-6744 (e-mail: christine.stoneman@usdoj.gov), or attorney Sebastian Aloit at (202)305-9349 (e-mail: sebastian.aloit@usdoj.gov).

We look forward to consulting with you as we both work to realize the goals of Executive Order 13166.

Attachments:

Executive Order 13160: "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs"

Executive Order 13166: "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency"

August 11, 2000 Policy Guidance Document: "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency" (LEP Guidance)

Form to return to COR with contact information

## Presidential Documents

Executive Order 13160 of June 23, 2000

### **Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Race, Sex, Color, National Origin, Disability, Religion, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Status as a Parent in Federally Conducted Education and Training Programs**

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 921-932 of title 20, United States Code; section 2164 of title 10, United States Code; section 2001 *et seq.*, of title 25, United States Code; section 7301 of title 5, United States Code; and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and to achieve equal opportunity in Federally conducted education and training programs and activities, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1.** *Statement of policy on education programs and activities conducted by executive departments and agencies.*

1-101. The Federal Government must hold itself to at least the same principles of nondiscrimination in educational opportunities as it applies to the education programs and activities of State and local governments, and to private institutions receiving Federal financial assistance. Existing laws and regulations prohibit certain forms of discrimination in Federally conducted education and training programs and activities—including discrimination against people with disabilities, prohibited by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 701 *et seq.*, as amended, employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or religion, prohibited by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000e-17, as amended, discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or religion in educational programs receiving Federal assistance, under Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, and sex-based discrimination in education programs receiving Federal assistance under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 *et seq.* Through this Executive Order, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, and status as a parent will be prohibited in Federally conducted education and training programs and activities.

1-102. No individual, on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or status as a parent, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in, a Federally conducted education or training program or activity.

**Sec. 2. Definitions.**

2-201. "Federally conducted education and training programs and activities" includes programs and activities conducted, operated, or undertaken by an executive department or agency.

2-202. "Education and training programs and activities" include, but are not limited to, formal schools, extracurricular activities, academic programs, occupational training, scholarships and fellowships, student internships, training for industry members, summer enrichment camps, and teacher training programs.

2-203. The Attorney General is authorized to make a final determination as to whether a program falls within the scope of education and training

programs and activities covered by this order, under subsection 2-202, or is excluded from coverage, under section 3.

2-204. "Military education or training programs" are those education and training programs conducted by the Department of Defense or, where the Coast Guard is concerned, the Department of Transportation, for the primary purpose of educating or training members of the armed forces or meeting a statutory requirement to educate or train Federal, State, or local civilian law enforcement officials pursuant to 10 U.S.C. Chapter 18.

2-205. "Armed Forces" means the Armed Forces of the United States.

2-206. "Status as a parent" refers to the status of an individual who, with respect to an individual who is under the age of 18 or who is 18 or older but is incapable of self-care because of a physical or mental disability, is:

- (a) a biological parent;
- (b) an adoptive parent;
- (c) a foster parent;
- (d) a stepparent;
- (e) a custodian of a legal ward;
- (f) in loco parentis over such an individual; or
- (g) actively seeking legal custody or adoption of such an individual.

### *Sec. 3. Exemption from coverage.*

3-301. This order does not apply to members of the armed forces, military education or training programs, or authorized intelligence activities. Members of the armed forces, including students at military academies, will continue to be covered by regulations that currently bar specified forms of discrimination that are now enforced by the Department of Defense and the individual service branches. The Department of Defense shall develop procedures to protect the rights of and to provide redress to civilians not otherwise protected by existing Federal law from discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, or status as a parent and who participate in military education or training programs or activities conducted by the Department of Defense.

3-302. This order does not apply to, affect, interfere with, or modify the operation of any otherwise lawful affirmative action plan or program.

3-303. An individual shall not be deemed subjected to discrimination by reason of his or her exclusion from the benefits of a program established consistent with federal law or limited by Federal law to individuals of a particular race, sex, color, disability, national origin, age, religion, sexual orientation, or status as a parent different from his or her own.

3-304. This order does not apply to ceremonial or similar education or training programs or activities of schools conducted by the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, that are culturally relevant to the children represented in the school. "Culturally relevant" refers to any class, program, or activity that is fundamental to a tribe's culture, customs, traditions, heritage, or religion.

3-305. This order does not apply to (a) selections based on national origin of foreign nationals to participate in covered education or training programs, if such programs primarily concern national security or foreign policy matters; or (b) selections or other decisions regarding participation in covered education or training programs made by entities outside the executive branch. It shall be the policy of the executive branch that education or training programs or activities shall not be available to entities that select persons for participation in violation of Federal or State law.

3-306. The prohibition on discrimination on the basis of age provided in this order does not apply to age-based admissions of participants to education or training programs, if such programs have traditionally been age-specific or must be age-limited for reasons related to health or national security.

**Sec. 4. Administrative enforcement.**

4-401. Any person who believes himself or herself to be aggrieved by a violation of this order or its implementing regulations, rules, policies, or guidance may, personally or through a representative, file a written complaint with the agency that such person believes is in violation of this order or its implementing regulations, rules, policies, or guidance. Pursuant to procedures to be established by the Attorney General, each executive department or agency shall conduct an investigation of any complaint by one of its employees alleging a violation of this Executive Order.

4-402. (a) If the office within an executive department or agency that is designated to investigate complaints for violations of this order or its implementing rules, regulations, policies, or guidance concludes that an employee has not complied with this order or any of its implementing rules, regulations, policies, or guidance, such office shall complete a report and refer a copy of the report and any relevant findings or supporting evidence to an appropriate agency official. The appropriate agency official shall review such material and determine what, if any, disciplinary action is appropriate.

(b) In addition, the designated investigating office may provide appropriate agency officials with a recommendation for any corrective and/or remedial action. The appropriate officials shall consider such recommendation and implement corrective and/or remedial action by the agency, when appropriate. Nothing in this order authorizes monetary relief to the complainant as a form of remedial or corrective action by an executive department or agency.

4-403. Any action to discipline an employee who violates this order or its implementing rules, regulations, policies, or guidance, including removal from employment, where appropriate, shall be taken in compliance with otherwise applicable procedures, including the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Public Law No. 95-454, 92 Stat. 1111.

**Sec. 5. Implementation and Agency Responsibilities.**

5-501. The Attorney General shall publish in the **Federal Register** such rules, regulations, policies, or guidance, as the Attorney General deems appropriate, to be followed by all executive departments and agencies. The Attorney General shall address:

- a. which programs and activities fall within the scope of education and training programs and activities covered by this order, under subsection 2-202, or excluded from coverage, under section 3 of this order;
- b. examples of discriminatory conduct;
- c. applicable legal principles;
- d. enforcement procedures with respect to complaints against employees;
- e. remedies;
- f. requirements for agency annual and tri-annual reports as set forth in section 6 of this order; and
- g. such other matters as deemed appropriate.

5-502. Within 90 days of the publication of final rules, regulations, policies, or guidance by the Attorney General, each executive department and agency shall establish a procedure to receive and address complaints regarding its Federally conducted education and training programs and activities. Each executive department and agency shall take all necessary steps to effectuate any subsequent rules, regulations, policies, or guidance issued by the Attorney General within 90 days of issuance.

5-503. The head of each executive department and agency shall be responsible for ensuring compliance within this order.

5-504. Each executive department and agency shall cooperate with the Attorney General and provide such information and assistance as the Attorney General may require in the performance of the Attorney General's functions under this order.



5-505. Upon request and to the extent practicable, the Attorney General shall provide technical advice and assistance to executive departments and agencies to assist in full compliance with this order.

**Sec. 6. Reporting Requirements.**

6-601. Consistent with the regulations, rules, policies, or guidance issued by the Attorney General, each executive department and agency shall submit to the Attorney General a report that summarizes the number and nature of complaints filed with the agency and the disposition of such complaints. For the first 3 years after the date of this order, such reports shall be submitted annually within 90 days of the end of the preceding year's activities. Subsequent reports shall be submitted every 3 years and within 90 days of the end of each 3-year period.

**Sec. 7. General Provisions.**

7-701. Nothing in this order shall limit the authority of the Attorney General to provide for the coordinated enforcement of nondiscrimination requirements in Federal assistance programs under Executive Order 12250.

**Sec. 8. Judicial Review.**

8-801. This order is not intended, and should not be construed, to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers, or its employees. This order is not intended, however, to preclude judicial review of final decisions in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 701, *et seq.*

*William Clinton*

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
June 23, 2000.



# Federal Register

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Wednesday,  
August 16, 2000

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## Part V

### The President

Executive Order 13166—Improving Access  
to Services for Persons With Limited  
English Proficiency

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### Department of Justice

Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil  
Rights Act of 1964—National Origin  
Discrimination Against Persons With  
Limited English Proficiency; Notice

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# Presidential Documents

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**Title 3—****The President****Executive Order 13166 of August 11, 2000****Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency**

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency (LEP), it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1. Goals.**

The Federal Government provides and funds an array of services that can be made accessible to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language. The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English. To this end, each Federal agency shall examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. Each Federal agency shall also work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance (recipients) provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. To assist the agencies with this endeavor, the Department of Justice has today issued a general guidance document (LEP Guidance), which sets forth the compliance standards that recipients must follow to ensure that the programs and activities they normally provide in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and its implementing regulations. As described in the LEP Guidance, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

**Sec. 2. Federally Conducted Programs and Activities.**

Each Federal agency shall prepare a plan to improve access to its federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons. Each plan shall be consistent with the standards set forth in the LEP Guidance, and shall include the steps the agency will take to ensure that eligible LEP persons can meaningfully access the agency's programs and activities. Agencies shall develop and begin to implement these plans within 120 days of the date of this order, and shall send copies of their plans to the Department of Justice, which shall serve as the central repository of the agencies' plans.

**Sec. 3. Federally Assisted Programs and Activities.**

Each agency providing Federal financial assistance shall draft title VI guidance specifically tailored to its recipients that is consistent with the LEP Guidance issued by the Department of Justice. This agency-specific guidance shall detail how the general standards established in the LEP Guidance will be applied to the agency's recipients. The agency-specific guidance shall take into account the types of services provided by the recipients, the individuals served by the recipients, and other factors set out in the LEP Guidance. Agencies that already have developed title VI guidance that the Department of Justice determines is consistent with the LEP Guidance shall examine their existing guidance, as well as their programs and activities, to determine if additional guidance is necessary to comply with this order. The Department of Justice shall consult with the agencies in creating their guidance and, within 120 days of the date of this order,

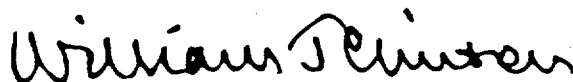
each agency shall submit its specific guidance to the Department of Justice for review and approval. Following approval by the Department of Justice, each agency shall publish its guidance document in the *Federal Register* for public comment.

**Sec. 4. Consultations.**

In carrying out this order, agencies shall ensure that stakeholders, such as LEP persons and their representative organizations, recipients, and other appropriate individuals or entities, have an adequate opportunity to provide input. Agencies will evaluate the particular needs of the LEP persons they and their recipients serve and the burdens of compliance on the agency and its recipients. This input from stakeholders will assist the agencies in developing an approach to ensuring meaningful access by LEP persons that is practical and effective, fiscally responsible, responsive to the particular circumstances of each agency, and can be readily implemented.

**Sec. 5. Judicial Review.**

This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its agencies, its officers or employees, or any person.



THE WHITE HOUSE,  
August 11, 2000.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

**Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency; Policy Guidance**

**AGENCY:** Civil Rights Division, Department of Justice.

**ACTION:** Policy guidance document.

**SUMMARY:** This Policy Guidance Document entitled "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency (LEP Guidance)" is being issued pursuant to authority granted by Executive Order 12250 and Department of Justice Regulations. It addresses the application of Title VI's prohibition on national origin discrimination when information is provided only in English to persons with limited English proficiency. This policy guidance does not create new obligations, but rather, clarifies existing Title VI responsibilities. The purpose of this document is to set forth general principles for agencies to apply in developing guidelines for services to individuals with limited English proficiency. The Policy Guidance Document appears below.

**DATES:** Effective August 11, 2000.

**ADDRESSES:** Coordination and Review Section, Civil Rights Division, P.O. Box 66560, Washington, D.C. 20035-6560.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Merrily Friedlander, Chief, Coordination and Review Section, Civil Rights Division, (202) 307-2222.

**Helen L. Norton,**

*Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division.*

Office of the Assistant Attorney General  
Washington, D.C. 20530

August 11, 2000.

**TO:** Executive Agency Civil Rights Officers

**FROM:** Bill Lann Lee, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division

**SUBJECT:** Policy Guidance Document: *Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency ("LEP Guidance")*

This policy directive concerning the enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d *et seq.*, as amended, is being issued pursuant to the authority granted by

Executive Order No. 12250<sup>1</sup> and Department of Justice regulations.<sup>2</sup> It addresses the application to recipients of federal financial assistance of Title VI's prohibition on national origin discrimination when information is provided only in English to persons who do not understand English. This policy guidance does not create new obligations but, rather, clarifies existing Title VI responsibilities.

Department of Justice Regulations for the Coordination of Enforcement of Non-discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs (Coordination Regulations), 28 C.F.R. 42.401 *et seq.*, direct agencies to "publish title VI guidelines for each type of program to which they extend financial assistance, where such guidelines would be appropriate to provide detailed information on the requirements of Title VI." 28 CFR § 42.404(a). The purpose of this document is to set forth general principles for agencies to apply in developing such guidelines for services to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). It is expected that, in developing this guidance for their federally assisted programs, agencies will apply these general principles, taking into account the unique nature of the programs to which they provide federal financial assistance.

A federal aid recipient's failure to assure that people who are not proficient in English can effectively participate in and benefit from programs and activities may constitute national origin discrimination prohibited by Title VI. In order to assist agencies that grant federal financial assistance in ensuring that recipients of federal financial assistance are complying with their responsibilities, this policy directive addresses the appropriate compliance standards. Agencies should utilize the standards set forth in this Policy Guidance Document to develop specific criteria applicable to review the programs and activities for which they offer financial assistance. The Department of Education<sup>3</sup> already has

established policies, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)<sup>4</sup> has been developing guidance in a manner consistent with Title VI and this Document, that applies to their specific programs receiving federal financial assistance.

**Background**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating against or otherwise excluding individuals on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any of their activities. Section 601 of Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, provides:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

The term "program or activity" is broadly defined. 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-4a.

Consistent with the model Title VI regulations drafted by a Presidential task force in 1964, virtually every executive agency that grants federal financial assistance has promulgated regulations to implement Title VI. These regulations prohibit recipients from "restrict[ing] an individual in any way in the enjoyment of any advantage or privilege enjoyed by others receiving any service, financial aid, or other benefit under the program" and "utiliz[ing] criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting individuals to discrimination" or have "the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of the program as respects individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin."

In *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974), the Supreme Court interpreted these provisions as requiring that a federal financial recipient take steps to ensure that language barriers did not exclude LEP persons from effective participation in its benefits and services. *Lau* involved a group of students of Chinese origin who did not speak English to whom the recipient provided the same services—an education provided solely in English—that it provided students who did speak English. The Court held that, under these circumstances, the school's practice violated the Title VI prohibition against discrimination on

<sup>1</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 2000d-1 note.

<sup>2</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 0.51.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Education policies regarding the Title VI responsibilities of public school districts with respect to LEP children and their parents are reflected in three Office for Civil Rights policy documents: (1) the May 1970 memorandum to school districts, "Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin," (2) the December 3, 1983, guidance document, "The Office for Civil Rights' Title VI Language Minority Compliance Procedures," and (3) the September 1991 memorandum, "Policy Update on Schools Obligations Toward National Origin Minority Students with Limited English Proficiency." These documents can be found at the Department of Education website at [www.ed.gov/office/OCR](http://www.ed.gov/office/OCR).

<sup>4</sup> The Department of Health and Human Services is issuing policy guidance titled: "Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination As It Affects Persons With Limited English Proficiency." This policy addresses the Title VI responsibilities of HHS recipients to individuals with limited English proficiency.

the basis of national origin. The Court observed that "[i]t seems obvious that the Chinese-speaking minority receive fewer benefits than the English-speaking majority from respondents' school system which denies them a meaningful opportunity to participate in the educational program—all earmarks of the discrimination banned by" the Title VI regulations.<sup>5</sup> Courts have applied the doctrine enunciated in *Lau* both inside and outside the education context. It has been considered in contexts as varied as what languages drivers' license tests must be given in or whether material relating to unemployment benefits must be given in a language other than English.<sup>6</sup>

#### Link Between National Origin And Language

For the majority of people living in the United States, English is their native language or they have acquired proficiency in English. They are able to participate fully in federally assisted programs and activities even if written and oral communications are exclusively in the English language.

The same cannot be said for the remaining minority who have limited English proficiency. This group includes persons born in other countries, some children of immigrants born in the United States, and other non-English or limited English proficient persons born in the United States, including some Native Americans. Despite efforts to learn and master English, their English language proficiency may be limited for some time.<sup>7</sup> Unless grant recipients take steps to respond to this difficulty, recipients effectively may deny those who do not

speak, read, or understand English access to the benefits and services for which they qualify.

Many recipients of federal financial assistance recognize that the failure to provide language assistance to such persons may deny them vital access to services and benefits. In some instances, a recipient's failure to remove language barriers is attributable to ignorance of the fact that some members of the community are unable to communicate in English, to a general resistance to change, or to a lack of awareness of the obligation to address this obstacle.

In some cases, however, the failure to address language barriers may not be simply an oversight, but rather may be attributable, at least in part, to invidious discrimination on the basis of national origin and race. While there is not always a direct relationship between an individual's language and national origin, often language does serve as an identifier of national origin.<sup>8</sup> The same sort of prejudice and xenophobia that may be at the root of discrimination against persons from other nations may be triggered when a person speaks a language other than English.

Language elicits a response from others, ranging from admiration and respect, to distance and alienation, to ridicule and scorn. Reactions of the latter type all too often result from or initiate racial hostility \* \* \*. It may well be, for certain ethnic groups and in some communities, that proficiency in a particular language, like skin color, should be treated as a surrogate for race under an equal protection analysis.<sup>9</sup>

While Title VI itself prohibits only intentional discrimination on the basis of national origin,<sup>10</sup> the Supreme Court has consistently upheld agency regulations prohibiting unjustified discriminatory effects.<sup>11</sup> The Department of Justice has consistently adhered to the view that the significant

discriminatory effects that the failure to provide language assistance has on the basis of national origin, places the treatment of LEP individuals comfortably within the ambit of Title VI and agencies' implementing regulations.<sup>12</sup> Also, existing language barriers potentially may be rooted in invidious discrimination. The Supreme Court in *Lau* concluded that a recipient's failure to take affirmative steps to provide "meaningful opportunity" for LEP individuals to participate in its programs and activities violates the recipient's obligations under Title VI and its regulations.

#### All Recipients Must Take Reasonable Steps To Provide Meaningful Access

Recipients who fail to provide services to LEP applicants and beneficiaries in their federally assisted programs and activities may be discriminating on the basis of national origin in violation of Title VI and its implementing regulations. Title VI and its regulations require recipients to take reasonable steps to ensure "meaningful" access to the information and services they provide. What constitutes reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access will be contingent on a number of factors. Among the factors to be considered are the number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population, the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program, the importance of the service provided by the program, and the resources available to the recipient.

##### (1) Number or Proportion of LEP Individuals

Programs that serve a few or even one LEP person are still subject to the Title VI obligation to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful opportunities for access. However, a factor in determining the reasonableness of a recipient's efforts is the number or proportion of people who will be excluded from the benefits or services absent efforts to remove language barriers. The steps that are reasonable for a recipient who serves one LEP person a year may be different than those expected from a recipient that serves several LEP persons each day. But even those who serve very few LEP persons on an infrequent basis should utilize this balancing analysis to determine whether reasonable steps are

<sup>5</sup> 414 U.S. at 568. Congress manifested its approval of the *Lau* decision requirements concerning the provision of meaningful education services by enacting provisions in the Education Amendments of 1974, Pub. L. No. 93-380, §§ 105, 204, 88 Stat. 503-512, 515 codified at 20 U.S.C. 1703(f), and the Bilingual Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*, which provided federal financial assistance to school districts in providing language services.

<sup>6</sup> For cases outside the educational context, see, e.g., *Sandoval v. Hagan*, 7 F. Supp. 2d 1234 (M.D. Ala. 1998), *affirmed*, 197 F.3d 484, (11th Cir. 1999), *rehearing and suggestion for rehearing en banc denied*, 211 F.3d 133 (11th Cir. Feb. 29, 2000) (Table, No. 98-6598-II), *petition for certiorari filed* May 30, 2000 (No. 99-1908) (giving drivers' license tests only in English violates Title VI); and *Pabon v. Levine*, 70 F.R.D. 674 (S.D.N.Y. 1976) (summary judgment for defendants denied in case alleging failure to provide unemployment insurance information in Spanish violated Title VI).

<sup>7</sup> Certainly it is important to achieve English language proficiency in order to fully participate at every level in American society. As we understand the Supreme Court's interpretation of Title VI's prohibition of national origin discrimination, it does not in any way disparage use of the English language.

<sup>8</sup> As the Supreme Court observed, "[l]anguage permits an individual to express both a personal identity and membership in a community, and those who share a common language may interact in ways more intimate than those without this bond." *Hernandez v. New York*, 500 U.S. 352, 370 (1991) (plurality opinion).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 371 (plurality opinion).

<sup>10</sup> *Alexander v. Choate*, 469 U.S. 287, 293 (1985).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* at 293-294; *Guardians Ass'n v. Civil Serv. Comm'n*, 463 U.S. 582, 584 n.2 (1983) (White, J.), 623 n.15 (Marshall, J.), 642-645 (Stevens, Brennan, Blackmun, JJ.); *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. at 568; *id.* at 571 (Stewart, J., concurring in result). In a July 24, 1994, memorandum to Heads of Departments and Agencies that Provide Federal Financial Assistance concerning "Use of the Disparate Impact Standard in Administrative Regulations Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," the Attorney General stated that each agency "should ensure that the disparate impact provisions of your regulations are fully utilized so that all persons may enjoy equally the benefits of federally financed programs."

<sup>12</sup> The Department's position with regard to written language assistance is articulated in 28 CFR § 42.405(d)(1), which is contained in the Coordination Regulations, 28 CFR Subpt. F, issued in 1976. These Regulations "govern the respective obligations of Federal agencies regarding enforcement of title VI." 28 CFR § 42.405. Section 42.405(d)(1) addresses the prohibitions cited by the Supreme Court in *Lau*.

possible and if so, have a plan of what to do if a LEP individual seeks service under the program in question. This plan need not be intricate; it may be as simple as being prepared to use one of the commercially available language lines to obtain immediate interpreter services.

#### (2) Frequency of Contact with the Program

Frequency of contacts between the program or activity and LEP individuals is another factor to be weighed. For example, if LEP individuals must access the recipient's program or activity on a daily basis, *e.g.*, as they must in attending elementary or secondary school, a recipient has greater duties than if such contact is unpredictable or infrequent. Recipients should take into account local or regional conditions when determining frequency of contact with the program, and should have the flexibility to tailor their services to those needs.

#### (3) Nature and Importance of the Program

The importance of the recipient's program to beneficiaries will affect the determination of what reasonable steps are required. More affirmative steps must be taken in programs where the denial or delay of access may have life or death implications than in programs that are not as crucial to one's day-to-day existence. For example, the obligations of a federally assisted school or hospital differ from those of a federally assisted zoo or theater. In assessing the effect on individuals of failure to provide language services, recipients must consider the importance of the benefit to individuals both immediately and in the long-term. A decision by a federal, state, or local entity to make an activity compulsory, such as elementary and secondary school attendance or medical inoculations, serves as strong evidence of the program's importance.

#### (4) Resources Available

The resources available to a recipient of federal assistance may have an impact on the nature of the steps that recipients must take. For example, a small recipient with limited resources may not have to take the same steps as a larger recipient to provide LEP

assistance in programs that have a limited number of eligible LEP individuals, where contact is infrequent, where the total cost of providing language services is relatively high, and/or where the program is not crucial to an individual's day-to-day existence. Claims of limited resources from large entities will need to be well-substantiated.<sup>13</sup>

#### Written vs. Oral Language Services

In balancing the factors discussed above to determine what reasonable steps must be taken by recipients to provide meaningful access to each LEP individual, agencies should particularly address the appropriate mix of written and oral language assistance. Which documents must be translated, when oral translation is necessary, and whether such services must be immediately available will depend upon the factors previously mentioned.<sup>14</sup> Recipients often communicate with the public in writing, either on paper or over the Internet, and written translations are a highly effective way of communicating with large numbers of

<sup>13</sup> Title VI does not require recipients to remove language barriers when English is an essential aspect of the program (such as providing civil service examinations in English when the job requires person to communicate in English, *see Frontera v. Sindell*, 522 F.2d 1215 (6th Cir. 1975)), or there is another "substantial legitimate justification for the challenged practice." *Elston v. Talladega County Bd. of Educ.*, 997 F.2d 1394, 1407 (11th Cir. 1993). Similar balancing tests are used in other nondiscrimination provisions that are concerned with effects of an entity's actions. For example, under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers need not cease practices that have a discriminatory effect if they are "consistent with business necessity" and there is no "alternative employment practice" that is equally effective. 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(k). Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 29 U.S.C. § 794, recipients do not need to provide access to persons with disabilities if such steps impose an undue burden on the recipient. *Alexander v. Choate*, 469 U.S. at 300. Thus, in situations where all of the factors identified in the text are at their nadir, it may be "reasonable" to take no affirmative steps to provide further access.

<sup>14</sup> Under the four-part analysis, for instance, Title VI would not require recipients to translate documents requested under a state equivalent of the Freedom of Information Act or Privacy Act, or to translate all state statutes or notices of rulemaking made generally available to the public. The focus of the analysis is the nature of the information being communicated, the intended or expected audience, and the cost of providing translations. In virtually all instances, one or more of these criteria would lead to the conclusion that recipients need not translate these types of documents.

people who do not speak, read or understand English. While the Department of Justice's Coordination Regulation, 28 CFR § 42.405(d)(1), expressly addresses requirements for provision of written language assistance, a recipient's obligation to provide meaningful opportunity is not limited to written translations. Oral communication between recipients and beneficiaries often is a necessary part of the exchange of information. Thus, a recipient that limits its language assistance to the provision of written materials may not be allowing LEP persons "effectively to be informed of or to participate in the program" in the same manner as persons who speak English.

In some cases, "meaningful opportunity" to benefit from the program requires the recipient to take steps to assure that translation services are promptly available. In some circumstances, instead of translating all of its written materials, a recipient may meet its obligation by making available oral assistance, or by commissioning written translations on reasonable request. It is the responsibility of federal assistance-granting agencies, in conducting their Title VI compliance activities, to make more specific judgments by applying their program expertise to concrete cases.

#### Conclusion

This document provides a general framework by which agencies can determine when LEP assistance is required in their federally assisted programs and activities and what the nature of that assistance should be. We expect agencies to implement this document by issuing guidance documents specific to their own recipients as contemplated by the Department of Justice Coordination Regulations and as HHS and the Department of Education already have done. The Coordination and Review Section is available to assist you in preparing your agency-specific guidance. In addition, agencies should provide technical assistance to their recipients concerning the provision of appropriate LEP services.

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## LEP/Executive Order 13166 Point-of-Contact

**Name:**

(Last name)

(First Name)

(Middle Initial)

(Title)

**Office Address:**

**Mailing Address (if different from Office):**

(Unit/Organization)

(Unit/Organization)

(Street)

(Room Number)

(Street)

(Room Number)

(City)

(State)

(ZIP)

(City)

(State)

(ZIP)

**Telephone:**( ) - (Ex. ) **Facsimile:** ( ) - **E-mail:** @

In the event your lead LEP Point-of-Contact is unavailable, please designate an alternate contact in the event it becomes necessary to transmit time-sensitive notices or documents:

(Last name)

(First Name)

(Middle Initial)

(Title)

**Telephone:**( ) - (Ex. ) **Facsimile:** ( ) - **E-mail:** @

You can electronically transmit the information requested by this form using the following address: [sebastian.aloot@usdoj.gov](mailto:sebastian.aloot@usdoj.gov). Please indicate "LEP Contact" in the subject line.

In the alternative, you can return the completed form by facsimile transmission to (202) 307-0595 or by mail addressed to:

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ATTN: LEP Contact  
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