



Administrative Policy No. 18.82

Subject: Certified Bilingual or Authorized Language Employees, Responsibilities, and Assignment Pay, for Bilingual and Dual Language

Information Contact: Human Resources Division

Authorizing Source: [RCW 74.04.025 Bilingual Services for non-English Speaking Applicants and Recipients](#)
[Chapter 388-03 WAC Certification of DSHS Spoken Language Interpreters, Translators, Employees, and Licensed Agency Personnel \(LAPL\)](#)
[WAC Chapter 388-818](#) Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

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Approved By: **Original approved by Wendy Long**
Senior Director, Human Resources Division

Purpose

This policy describes the eligibility, roles, responsibilities, for certified or authorized bilingual Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) employees using bilingual skills as a work requirement, and the ability for appointing authorities to designate a position as bilingual. This policy also describes employee eligibility for certified or authorized bilingual or dual language employees to receive assignment pay.

Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS employees.

To the extent any part of this policy is in conflict with a [collective bargaining agreement](#) (CBA), the terms of the CBA supersede the policy.

Additional Guidance

[DSHS administrative policies](#)

- 7.20 communication access for persons who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened, deaf-plus, and/or speech disabled
- 7.21 access to people with limited English-proficiency
- 7.22 cultural competence
- 18.28 compensation
- [DSHS 03-407 position description form](#)

Definitions

Assignment pay: The premium added to an employee's base salary to recognize specialized skills, assigned duties, or unique circumstances that exceed those normally assigned or experienced.

Certified or authorized bilingual employee: An employee who has passed the required DSHS bilingual employee examination in either a certified or screened language. [WAC 388-03-030](#)

Client: A person who applies for, or receives, services from DSHS.

Dual language employees: DSHS employees who are bilingual and use their spoken and sign language proficiency for face-to-face communications, who are eligible for assignment pay.

Interpretation: The transfer of oral or manual communication from one language to another.

Interpreter: Any individual who interprets for other people conversing in different languages.

Language access advisor: DSHS employees(s) assigned by the DSHS executive management team to oversee the provision of language access services for clients with limited English-proficiency (LEP), and clients who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened, deaf plus, speech disabled, blind, or have limited vision within their respective administration or division.

[Language testing and certification program \(LTC\)](#): Within the Office of Equity, Diversity, Access, and Inclusion (OEDAI), the LTC is the unit responsible for administering certification testing in spoken foreign languages for DSHS employees, contracted interpreters, translators, and licensed agency personnel (LAPL).

Limited English proficient (LEP): A person with a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

Non-English speaking person: A person who cannot readily speak or understand the English language but does not include hearing-impaired persons.

Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH): Within the Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA), ODHH provides the services under [WAC 388-818-0020](#), including

identifying ways for DSHS staff to get sign language interpreter services for their clients who have hearing loss; administering and monitoring contracts with sign language interpreters and sign language interpreter referral agencies; and with qualified service providers.

Person with limited English proficiency (LEP): A person with limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

Position cluster: A group of DSHS jobs or positions that share the same or similar nature of job functions or responsibilities.

Third-party capacity: Providing interpretation or translation services for another DSHS employee in order for that employee to accomplish their job duties. Interpretation or translation services provided must be related to DSHS business.

Translation: Transferring written communication from one language to another.

Translator: An individual providing translation for people who read and write different languages.

Policy

A. Certification of DSHS employees as bilingual interpreters and translators.

1. The DSHS Language Testing and Certification (LTC) program within the Office of Equity, Diversity, Access, and Inclusion (OEDAI) is responsible under [chapter 388-03 WAC](#) to:
 - a. Establish the qualifications for certified and authorized DSHS bilingual employees, contracted interpreters and translators, and LAPL.
 - b. Establish the requirements and procedures for administering certification testing and evaluating DSHS bilingual interpreters and translators, and LAPL.
2. Under [WAC 388-03-160](#), once a DSHS employee has been certified or authorized by LTC as a bilingual employee, their credential will stay active as long as they remain in the position cluster for which they were certified or authorized.
3. An employee loses their certification status if the employee moves out of a designated bilingual position, and they no longer use their bilingual skills for four consecutive years or longer. At that point, they would need to retest to obtain certified or authorized bilingual employee status for the position cluster they are entering.

B. DSHS employees determined eligible as dual language interpreters and translators

1. Under DSHS administrative policy 7.20, DSHS may recognize certain DSHS employees to provide dual language and translation services.

2. To determine a position designated as dual language eligible for assignment pay, see DSHS administrative policy 7.20 communication access for persons who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened, deaf-plus, and/or speech disabled.

C. Designating the need for a position requiring bilingual or dual language skills for assignment pay

1. For the appointing authority or designee must determine the need for an employee with bilingual language skills as part of the positions normally and specifically assigned duties requiring assignment pay, in addition to the criteria under [RCW 74.04.025](#) that must be evaluated, other factors to be considered include:
 - a. Language demographics of the service delivery area.
 - b. Frequency an employee uses their dual language skills.
 - c. Infrequent use of dual language skills may not qualify for assignment pay.
 - d. Costs of contracted services to meet specific language access needs.
 - e. Obligation to use culturally appropriate service delivery mode through qualified staff to increase the quality of service. See DSHS administrative policy 7.21 cultural competence.
2. Only positions in Washington general service will be considered for bilingual or dual language skills assignment pay.
3. If the position does not currently have a bilingual or dual language designation on the [DSHS 03-407](#) position description form (PDF), the supervisor will need to enter a position action in the flexible agency resource management (FARM) system for HRD classification and compensation to process.
4. Job bulletins for vacant positions requiring bilingual or dual language skills must indicate bilingual or dual language proficiency requirements and must specify how and to what extent the dual language skills will be used on the job.
5. The [DSHS 03-407 position description form](#) (PDF) must specify how and to what extent the bilingual or dual language skills will be used on the job.
6. Applicants for positions requiring bilingual or dual language skills must pass the appropriate bilingual or dual language test or assessment prior to being appointed.
7. An employee who receives their certification and wants to receive assignment pay when they are in a designated position requiring bilingual or dual language skills, must provide a copy of their certification to their supervisor to submit to HRD to place in the personnel file.

8. Bilingual or dual language employees who are full-time will be paid a monthly rate for assignment pay. Employees working part-time will be paid on an hourly basis for assignment pay.
9. Appointing authorities are responsible for auditing their positions designated as bilingual or dual language, especially upon a new hire, transfer, or change of a position designated as bilingual or dual language.
10. Approved assignment pay for bilingual or dual language skills will be removed if the skills, duties, or circumstances are based on change.
11. Approved assignment pay for bilingual or dual language skills will be removed if the skills, duties, or circumstances are based on change.
12. Assignment pay for use of bilingual or dual language skills is not to be used as compensation for additional workload
13. If the employee regains their certification or authorization, the employee or the supervisor can send the certification back through FARM. Bilingual or dual language assignment pay will not restart until the effective date of the new certification or authorization.

D. Testing requirements for bilingual language skills

1. Prior to using bilingual skills on the job, employees must demonstrate their ability to use these skills based on the following assessment:
 - a. Applicants and employees must pass the required language proficiency test(s) offered through LTC, as outlined in the [position cluster and bilingual employee certification testing requirements](#).
 - b. Bilingual employees who move from one job classification to another must meet the certification requirements for the job classification they are moving into. After the employee has taken and passed the appropriate test, they are allowed to use their bilingual language skills in the new position.
Example: A certified bilingual public benefits specialist takes a new position as a social service specialist and must pass a new assessment to use their bilingual language skills as a social worker.
2. An employee who does not pass the required proficiency skills test(s) or assessment must not:
 - a. Receive assignment pay.
 - b. Use non-English language skills on the job with clients as part of their regular work assignments.

E. Role of bilingual and dual language employees

1. Certified or authorized bilingual and dual language employees work directly with and assist clients or other employees as required in their PDF.
2. Bilingual dual language employees may periodically be used in a third-party capacity, as interpreters or translators in non-client related situations, or in brief, emergent client-related situations.
3. Normally, bilingual and dual language employees should not interpret or translate in a third-party capacity on a regular basis.
4. An appointing authority assigning an employee to provide interpreter or translation services in a third-party capacity for another DSHS employee working with a DSHS client on DSHS business must ensure that:
 - a. The employee is tested and certified or authorized to provide bilingual or dual language services at the appropriate level for the type and scope being performed. The administration's language access advisor or coordinator will provide assistance determining appropriate employee testing. See DSHS AP 7.21 access to services to people with limited English-proficiency.
 - b. The employee's workload is adjusted accordingly.
 - c. The employee's interpreter or translator responsibilities are clearly outlined in their PDF.
 - d. The employee's translation responsibilities are limited to "client specific" documents only. Translation of official DSHS documents must be processed through the administration's translation service coordinator. See DSHS AP 7.21 access to services to people with limited English-proficiency.
 - e. If providing sign language interpreting, the employee must be registered and approved by ODHH as a dual language certified sign language interpreter. (See DSHS administrative policy 7.20 communication access for persons who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened, deaf-plus, or speech disabled.)