

## **Policy: Communication Assistance for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency and/or Disabilities**

Timely and accurate communication with the public is essential to the School Nutrition Program mission to increase food security, reduce hunger, and expand access to a healthy diet and nutrition education. USDA is committed to advancing equity for all, including historically underserved individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP), through meaningful language access to School Nutrition Program benefits, information, and services.

For individuals with LEP, School Nutrition Program and staff are required to plan for and take reasonable steps to provide timely, accurate, and meaningful access to all programs or activities administered by the School Nutrition Program, and recipients of federal financial assistance from the USDA.

This policy reflects that it is the responsibility of the School Nutrition Program, and not that of an individual seeking services, to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access, at no cost to the individual, to all programs and activities and to foster equity for individuals to interact, or may interact, with the agency over the phone, in writing, in person, or via electronic methods. \*

Ensuring the quality and accuracy of language assistance services provided by the Department is critical to providing individuals with LEP meaningful access to School Nutrition Program and activities. Where applicable, considering the program's mission and operations, School Nutrition staff shall take reasonable steps to effectively inform the public of the agency's programs and activities in relevant threshold languages.

### **How to Request Assistance:**

Call the main Child Nutrition Programs (CNP) line at 334-694-4656 to request free interpretation or translation services for individuals with LEP and/or disabilities. An ALSDE CNP staff member will coordinate with the State's vendor to provide qualified interpreters or translators for non-English languages or sign language.

Contact the Alabama Relay Service for free relay and speech-disabled services, enabling individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have a speech disability to place and receive phone calls. Dial 711 or visit <https://alabamarelay.com/>.

\*Although the Language Access Plan (LAP) focuses on providing language assistance to persons with LEP, the School Nutrition Program also has a separate responsibility to ensure effective communication with individuals with disabilities, as required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This may mean ensuring that communications are compliant with the Plan and the School Nutrition Program responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act.