

**NEW MEXICO JUDICIARY
LANGUAGE ACCESS SPECIALIST PROGRAM
Program Overview
11.2012**

The Language Access Specialist (LAS) Program, a joint project of the New Mexico Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Language Access Services, and the New Mexico Center for Language Access (NMCLA), University of New Mexico – Los Alamos, is a significant element of the New Mexico Judiciary's language access plan and services. Through this program bilingual employees of the judiciary are trained and certified to provide meaningful language access outside the courtroom. All New Mexico Courts are encouraged to identify qualified employees to become certified language access specialists, with a goal of a minimum of one certified LAS per court by FY 15, as part of their ongoing language access planning process. It is essential that the program be integrated with the court's related language access services to ensure that the LAS role is clear, the services are needed, and the employee will have the flexibility to use their certification to serve court customers outside the courtroom. This is important, as well, because with court approval and successful completion of continuing education requirements, a certified LAS may be awarded a \$1.00 per hour wage incentive per New Mexico Judiciary Personnel Policies.

To be eligible for LAS certification an employee must follow these steps:

- ✓ Be fluent in English and his/her other language;
- ✓ Have the pre-approval of his/her supervisor and court administration, including the court's agreement that the employee will be allowed to provide language access services as part of or in addition to their regular duties;
- ✓ Identify method of payment in advance of applying to NMCLA, i.e. self-pay, AOC scholarship, court funds;
- ✓ Complete the NMCLA application process and be accepted into the certification program.

Once certified, an LAS must comply with the continuing education requirements established by the AOC. Continued work as an LAS is at the discretion of the court.

Roles & Responsibilities

The following information provides details and directions regarding how the Language Access Specialist Program is administered and clarifies the specific roles and responsibilities of those involved.

AOC Language Access Services is responsible for the overall management and ongoing development/evaluation of the LAS Program. This includes:

1. Working with NMCLA:
 - a. Tailor the LAS certification curriculum and continuing education sessions to the needs of New Mexico's courts and its language access specialists;
 - b. Develop training schedules on a yearly basis and communicate these schedules to the employees of the NM Judiciary;
 - c. Track judiciary employees through the application process and the training program;
 - d. Contract for the provision of six to eight continuing education sessions per year.
2. Working with the courts:
 - a. Provide information on a regular basis regarding the certification training schedule and available scholarships;
 - b. Track continuing education compliance and communicate twice yearly with LAS supervisors in the courts regarding LAS performance and certification maintenance;
 - c. Assist the courts, upon request, with training regarding the role and ethical parameters of the LAS, identification of employees qualified for certification, and related language access services.
3. Working with Language Access Specialists:
 - a. Provide needed information regarding the LAS certification process, scholarships that may be available, continuing education requirements and offerings, etc.;
 - b. Upon notification from NMCLA that an employee has been certified, establish a file for the LAS that includes a copy of their NMCLA LAS certificate; job title and contact information; supervisor's name and contact information;
 - c. Track each LAS participation in continuing education sessions;
 - d. Participate in continuing education sessions.

Court Administrators and Supervisors are responsible, through their ongoing language access planning effort, for ensuring to the extent possible that their court has a qualified complement of language access specialists consistent with the demographics of their jurisdiction.

1. Identify candidates for LAS certification:
 - a. Share LAS information with court employees;
 - b. As part of the court's language access planning efforts identify the need for LAS and recruit appropriate candidates;
 - c. Respond to employees interested in LAS certification by approving or disapproving their participation, potential for wage incentive, and court assistance, if any, with training costs.
2. Complete necessary paperwork, upon receipt of verification of certification, to authorize, if agreed to, the wage incentive for each

certified LAS. (See Language Access Specialist Program Policies and Procedures for Bilingual Compensation Form.)

3. Reauthorize bilingual compensation every two years based on availability of funding and certification compliance as reported to the court by AOC Language Access Services. (See Language Access Specialist Program Policies and Procedures for Reauthorization Form.)
4. Receive twice yearly updates from AOC on the court's certified LAS/s and provide feedback on the LAS program as requested by AOC.
5. Bring problems, concerns, and other issues regarding the LAS Program to the attention of the AOC Language Access Services Program Manager in a timely manner.

Certified Language Access Specialists must fulfill certain standards and be available to provide language access services as part of and in addition to their regular job duties.

1. Provide, upon certification, a copy of their NMCLA Certification to the court's human resources division and to the AOC's Language Access Services Program Manager;
2. Complete data information sheet for AOC –Language Access Services' files;
3. Provide language access services, as requested, within the court and via phone with other courts, as requested and with supervisor's approval;
4. Participate in a minimum of two continuing education webinars per calendar year, providing verification of attendance to the appropriate Human Resources office and to the AOC Language Access Services Program Manager;
5. Bring problems, concerns, and other issues regarding the LAS Program to the attention of the AOC Language Access Services Program Manager in a timely manner.

Potential Candidates for Certification must have the approval of their court administration and supervisor and must have identified funding prior to beginning the NMCLA application process. Each candidate must follow these steps prior to beginning the NMCLA application process:

1. Conduct a self-assessment of your language skills in English and your other language (self-assessment tools can be found on-line and you can ask for feedback from co-workers and friends);
2. Secure written approval of your supervisor and court administrator and **confirm** the source of funds to pay for the training (self-pay, court funds, AOC scholarship, other) and provide this information to AOC Language Access Services Program Manager.

Once approval has been received and funding confirmed, begin the NMCLA application process:

1. Go to www.nmcenterforlangaugeaccess.com to complete the application form;
2. Submit the two required essays;
3. When notified, complete the on-line interview process;
4. Register for the training and pay the required fees upon notification of acceptance into the program.

NMCLA is a key partner in the Language Access Specialist Program and, working collaboratively with AOC, agrees to:

1. Tailor the LAS certification curriculum and continuing education sessions to the needs of New Mexico's courts and its language access specialists;
2. Develop training schedules on a yearly basis;
3. Track judiciary employees, by court, through the application process and the training program, providing regular updates to AOC, notifying the AOC of any drop-outs or failures to successfully complete the program;
4. Contract for the provision of six to eight continuing education sessions per year;
5. Provide verification of program completion/certification to AOC within seven days of course completion;
6. Provide verification of participation in continuing education sessions to each LAS and to the AOC within seven days of completion of the continuing education session.