



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

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OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME
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THE OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME ANNOUNCES LANGUAGE ACCESS INITIATIVE TO REDUCE LANGUAGE BARRIERS TO VICTIM SERVICES

WASHINGTON - The Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) has launched an initiative to reduce language barriers for underserved victims throughout the Nation. The two-pronged approach will address training and technical assistance for victim service providers and allied professionals, and enhance OVC's ability to incorporate language access into its many programs.

Language and communication barriers prevent millions of Deaf, hard of hearing, and limited English proficient (LEP) victims across the country from seeking and receiving services. Although federal laws require state and local programs and services to be equally accessed by all victims, in practice many service providers across the country are not as aware of these legal requirements or lack the tools to provide meaningful or effective access.

"Too often, language barriers, cultural intolerance, and social isolation prevent victims from seeking and receiving help," said OVC Director Joye Frost. "We want to equip service providers with tools to effectively and clearly communicate with Deaf, hard of hearing, and limited English proficient individuals and ensure that they are able to offer victims a full range of services and support."

The three-year OVC Language Access Training and Technical Assistance Program provides an approximately \$1 million grant to the Vera Institute of Justice and its partners to ensure equal access to services for Deaf, hard of hearing, and LEP individuals through an innovative and dual approach for these historically underserved populations. The program will provide training and technical assistance for crime victim service providers and allied professionals, including police officers, prosecutors, and court administrators. The program will establish a new online language access resource center, lead in-person and online trainings at conferences and meetings of victim service providers and other victim advocates, and conduct specialized one-on-one consultation for service providers to help them develop procedures and sensible practices to ensure equal access for LEP, Deaf, and hard of hearing victims.

In addition, OVC has brought on Tuyet Duong, a national language access expert, as its Language Access Fellow to lead the development of a comprehensive and long-term plan to reach Deaf, hard of hearing, and LEP communities through its programs, products, and services. Ms. Duong comes to OVC with a long history of working on equal access issues as an attorney and advocate in both the nonprofit and government sectors, particularly as a victim service provider. As OVC's Language Access Fellow, she will identify effective and emerging strategies to improve access to OVC materials and programs;

review OVC resources, products, and training; and develop recommendations regarding OVC's Language Access Program Plan.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Karol V. Mason, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has six components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at <http://www.ojp.gov>.