

Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission



Language Access Plan

July 2026

ILLINOIS WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

I. Authority and Purpose

This document serves as the Language Access Plan for the Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission (IWCC) to provide services to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The IWCC operates as the administrative court system to resolve disputed workers' compensation claims between employees and employers. The IWCC is committed to providing informational assistance to employers and employees regarding their rights and obligations under the Workers' Compensation Act and the process and procedure before the Commission. The purpose of this Language Access Plan is to outline the available language assistance to individuals with limited English proficiency who interact with the IWCC and to ensure these individuals have equal access and understand their rights as injured workers or employers.

II. Identification and Assessment of LEP Communities

A person with limited English proficiency is someone who cannot speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level sufficient to understand their rights and obligations under the Workers' Compensation Act and the process and procedure before the Commission. The IWCC staff has identified Spanish and Polish the most frequently spoken languages among the LEP population, based on interactions with the IWCC constituency. This aligns with current U.S. Census data. The IWCC maintains regional offices and trial sites throughout the state. Typically, these offices do not encounter constituents in need of language services. Should the need arise, all offices coordinate with each other and can support the individuals with limited English proficiency.

Largest Language Groups and Largest Limited-English Language Groups in Illinois: 2018-2022			
Largest Language Groups		Largest Limited-English Language Groups	
	# of Speakers		# of Speakers
Spanish	1,638,222	Spanish	616,760
Polish	169,308	Polish	73,843
Chinese*	106,399	Chinese*	51,494
Filipino, Tagalog	86,051	Filipino, Tagalog	23,198
Arabic	67,017	Arabic	20,342
Urdu	56,122	Korean	20,165
Gujarati	50,196	Gujarati	18,762
Hindi	47,274	Russian	17,649
Russian	44,211	Vietnamese	13,966
Korean	39,624	Urdu	13,893
French	36,728	Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Little Russian	11,817

III. Language Assistance Measures

A. Interpreters provided for pro se litigants executing settlement contracts.

Pursuant to Section 9 of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act, "Prior to the approval of any pro se Settlement Lump Sum Petition, the Commission or an Arbitrator thereof shall determine if the unrepresented employee, if present, is able to read and communicate in English. If not, it shall be the responsibility of the Commission to provide a qualified, independent interpreter." (820 ILCS

305/9). To fulfill this requirement, the IWCC provides an interpreter for pro se litigants executing a settlement contract. The IWCC has a dedicated staff member who facilitates these requests at no cost to the pro se litigant.

Should an interpreter be needed for pro se litigants executing a settlement contract, either the pro se litigant or the arbitrator the pro se litigant is appearing before can contact Annette Roti Annette.roti@illinois.gov or (312) 814-7268 for the request. Please allow one week before the appearance at the IWCC.

B. Bilingual Staff

The first point of contact for people who interact with the IWCC in the Chicago office is Karina Cruz who is fluent in English and Spanish. Ms. Cruz can help a Spanish speaking individual understand and answer questions regarding the process of a claim before the IWCC. Ms. Cruz begins by asking the visitor if he/she speaks Spanish or refers the visitor to the “I Speak” poster.¹

Our bilingual staff will track and record interactions with the LEP individuals in a shared folder of LEP encounters.

Training for new employees will occur during new employee onboarding and annually thereafter.

C. Identifying LEP Individuals

At first contact with a LEP-possible licensee, IWCC employee shall take all reasonable steps to assess whether the individual needs language assistance services.

These steps include the following:

- The employee should ask professional, open-ended questions of the LEP-possible licensee to determine the individual’s ability to speak or understand English. Open-ended questions are those that require a complex, non-static response: these are typically of the “who”, “what”, “when”, “where”, and “why” variety. Examples of open-ended questions include: “Thank you for contacting the Illinois Workers’ Compensation Commission. How may we assist you today?” or “What Illinois Workers’ Compensation Department are you trying to contact?”
- If the employee determines that the LEP- is proficient in understanding and

¹ The IWCC is currently in the process of hiring an additional bilingual receptionist for the Chicago office.

speaking English, he or she should ask the LEP whether he or she needs assistance in reading or writing English.

- If the LEP makes an oral or written request for translation or interpretation services in a specific language, the constituent should be considered as LEP.
- Once the constituent is determined to be LEP, the IWCC employee should assess the type and nature of language assistance services required. This includes a determination of the language or languages in which the licensee is proficient, and whether the client needs translation services, interpretation services, or both. The staff member should utilize and “I speak...”[language]” identification card, document, or poster, if available. The staff member may also utilize the language access document, if available.
- Although use of informal interpreters – such as family members or the internet – should be avoided, staff members may utilize such for purposes of assessing a client’s LEP status.
- The staff member should document these steps via email to their supervisor and, if language assistance services are needed, to note the type and nature of services needed. The supervisor will send an e-mail notification to the language access coordinator if it is determined that language assistance services are needed. The notification shall include the LEP licensee’s name, the licensee’s language of choice and the specific language assistance services needed/utilized.

D. On Demand Interpretation Services

Telephonic Interpretation Services are made available for all in- person and telephone contact with the public. “I SPEAK” posters are or will be posted at every IWCC hearing and office site statewide so that a LEP individual will be able to notify staff of his or her native language. If a constituent visits or calls the IWCC and does not speak English. Propio Language Services can be contacted using the following steps:

- a. Call (312) 500-7986, or if unavailable call (866) 386-1284

When prompted: For a Spanish interpreter, press 1.

For all other languages, press 2

Enter the 2-digit language code (see Language Interpretation Directions, attached).

Enter the 5-digit account number: **15758**

Provide to the agent the caller’s first name and initial of last name

and phone number with area code, as well as your First and Last Name and Location.

- b. Launch the website: <https://one.propio-ls.com/login>

Enter user code: IUdc1i

Search or scroll for the language

Click to connect to audio or video using the icons.

Will monitor activity on Propio and log activities in monthly log.

- c. Contact the IWCC Secretary, **Michele Kowalski** (michele.kowalski@illinois.gov) immediately after using the service for invoicing and accounting purposes.

Propio Language Services provides qualified legal translators via audio or video. Please note, the IWCC cannot give legal advice but is able to provide basic assistance as to navigating the CompFile system and general procedural questions.

E. Email Communications

The IWCC maintains a dedicated email address wcc.compfile@illinois.gov, operated by the Information Staff to answer any questions regarding the use of CompFile, its digital portal. If an individual with limited English proficiency needs assistance, the information staff can direct that individual to informational materials on the website in either Spanish or Polish. Should the individual assistance outside of these languages, the staff member can establish a conference call with the LEP individual and Propio Language Services as described above.

F. Telecommunication for the Deaf (TDD)

The IWCC provides a telecommunication for people who are deaf at (866) 383-4370.

G. Website Resources

Currently, the IWCC maintains its Workers' Compensation and Occupational Diseases Manual, Workplace Notices and other informational materials and brochures in Spanish and Polish. In addition, the IWCC website links to these resources as well as lists Frequently Asked Questions in in Spanish and Polish. The website also notifies the public about the availability of interpreters and instructions on how to request an interpreter through the IWCC. The website itself can be translated into several languages using the translate widget on the top of any of its webpages.

IV. Vital Documents

A. Vital documents are described as any documents provided by the IWCC that contain information critical for obtaining services or required by law. The IWCC has identified the following vital documents:

- IWCC Handbook
- Pro Se's Guide to Filing A Case
- Guidelines for Employees Filing a Case (Without an Attorney)
- Pro Se Settlement Contract Guidance
- Arbitrator Evaluation Form
- Complaint Form

These documents will be updated in both Spanish and Polish soon and will be available on the IWCC website.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

In accordance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, the IWCC, will coordinate with the Governor's Office of New Americans to review and monitor the implementation of its Language Access Plan and ensure ongoing compliance with the Act. All unresolved complaints will be sent to the Gov.NewAmericans@illinois.gov inbox.

The LAC will preform an annual review that will include assessing the effectiveness of current language services, reviewing requests for assistance and complaints. Evaluate changes in language needs when they arise.

VI. Complaints and Grievances

Any individual who believes they were denied equal access due to language barriers may file a complaint by contacting the Language Access Coordinator @ whitney.martin@illinois.gov or submitting a written complaint to Gov.NewAmericans@illinois.gov. All instructions will be found on the IWCC website.

VII. Notification of Language Access Services

The IWCC will notify employees, staff, attorneys and the public of available services by posting notifications on the website, and by posting multilingual signage in public areas.

VIII. Goals and Action Steps

The IWCC is committed to helping injured workers and employees overcome language barriers to understand their rights especially when entering into a settlement agreement without representation. The IWCC will also continue to provide pro se

litigants with limited English proficiency interpretation services at no cost to them as outlined in Section 9 of the Illinois Workers' Compensation Act.

To further its commitment in ensuring every individual who has limited English proficiency access to the workers' compensation system, the IWCC commits to taking the following action steps:

- The IWCC will update the Vital Documents to reflect new procedural guidelines and seek to translate these documents in Spanish and Polish.
- The IWCC will maintain an account with Propio Language Services to translate documents and provide on demand translation services.
- The IWCC will train staff on language access procedures and best practices for constituents with limited English proficiency.
- The IWCC will preform a critical review of its website as it is updated to ensure those with limited English proficiency can access public information.
- The IWCC will better publicize translation services to individuals with limited English proficiency who have questions or concerns.
- Finally, the IWCC will continue to work with the Governor's Office and other state and federal agencies to provide meaningful and equal access to all services provided by the Commission.

IX. Public Notification and Ongoing Plan Evaluation

- A. This Language Access Plan is subject to review and evaluation by the Illinois Governor's Office. Upon approval, this Plan may be made available on the IWCC website.
- B. This Language Access Plan is to be reviewed on an annual basis by the language access coordinator to ensure all stakeholders can effectively communicate with the office.

CONTACT INFORMATION

LAP Contact:

Whitney Martin- Research & Education

69 W. Washington, Suite 900

Chicago, IL 60602

312-814-6793

Whitney.martin@illinois.gov

Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission Audio and Video Remote Interpreting



1. Launch the Propio ONE app:



Or

Launch the desktop browser/PC (Chrome):

<https://one.propio-lls.com/>

2. Log in Enter User Code: **IUdc1i**
Click LOG IN

3. Language Search for or scroll to the language.
Click the audio icon to connect to an
audio only interpreter.
Click the video icon to connect to a
video interpreter.

Be prepared to provide billing information as requested
by your internal management.

Illinois Workers' Compensation Commission
Access Code: 15758

For an interpreter, dial: 1-312-500-7986
Provide Required Info:

Your first name & last name (please provide spelling)

Location

If primary number is unavailable,
use the back-up service line at
1-866-386-1284

