

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

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“Language of Justice” video highlights “consistent, meaningful access” to Michigan courts for non-English speakers

LANSING, MI, October 1, 2013 -- Michigan courts are moving forward with implementing a new court rule, aimed at ensuring “consistent, meaningful access” to Michigan courts for those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), according to Justice Bridget M. McCormack, who appears in a new *Court Stories* video, “The Language of Justice.”

The LEP rule, adopted by the Supreme Court on September 11, provides a clear, uniform approach for courts serving LEP litigants, McCormack said. McCormack, the Court’s liaison justice on access to justice issues, said that implementation plans are moving forward with practical guidelines.

“We want to make sure everybody in every court across Michigan has consistent, meaningful access to our courts,” McCormack said. “Many courts have seen an increase in the number of people needing language services and already do an excellent job facilitating those services. This rule simply provides guidance and consistency for all.”

Chad Schmucker, State Court Administrator, noted, “Under the rule, trial courts must submit a language access plan but they’re not without help. SCAO will provide resources to assist with implementation.”

Schmucker, a former circuit judge, added, “The goal of courts is to fairly administer justice, and this will help ensure effective resolution of cases.” He also noted that Frequently Asked Questions will be posted on the Court’s website, and that SCAO will provide a template for a language access plan and census data for jurisdictions. SCAO also maintains a list of over 60 certified interpreters in seven languages.

62B District Judge William Kelly, a member of the LEP Steering Committee which had input on the rule, noted the increased use of language interpreters in the Kentwood community, which his court serves. “Last year, we utilized more than ten language interpreters, and have been able to balance meeting the needs of the LEP population with the realities of our budget. Our court has used interpreters present in the courtroom as well as telephone interpreters, ideal for short hearings and hearings that need an immediate interpreter. Slides about the rights of litigants are prepared in the four most frequently needed languages and are easy to make. The rights are given clearly both orally and visually. The slide shows save time and money,” said Kelly.

To view the video, visit <http://courts.mi.gov/news-events/court-stories/pages/default.aspx>

For more information, visit
<http://courts.mi.gov/Administration/SCAO/OfficesPrograms/FLI/Pages/default.aspx>

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