

AUCD Language and Communication Access Plan

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Section 1: Background and Context

Values

Communication is giving and receiving information. AUCD works with people with disabilities, families, educators, researchers, advocates and professionals around the world. Everyone communicates differently. People use different languages. People have different reading levels. People have different abilities to speak, read, hear, and write. AUCD wants everyone to know what is being talked about and to be able to share their ideas, either by speaking or writing. We want all people to be included.

A link to a glossary of terms is available in Appendix A.

Background and Context

AUCD is made up of centers and programs that connect universities with communities.

AUCD recognizes the need to respond to increasingly diverse communities across the country. We are committed to the meaningful participation of a wide variety of populations in network services and activities. People with complex communication challenges have the right to express themselves in the manner of their choosing. AUCD values our diverse network and seeks to create an intentional and welcoming environment that respects individual differences, including language and communication preferences.

“Living without being able to communicate is like being behind four glass walls. You are able to see others and they can see you; but you are ignored, or worse, talked down to until you stop remembering who you are and why you are important.”

-- Rick Creech, AAC User, Testimony Senate Special Committee on Aging Hearing, 4/27/2017

There are a growing number of individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and people who require alternative communication methods in the U.S., within our network, and at AUCD.

In the United States (U. S.):

- 25.1 million individuals were considered to have LEP, which is about 8% of the total population and at least 350 languages are spoken in U. S. homes.ⁱ
- Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog are the top five languages most spoken by people with LEP in the U.S., the top five languages spoken may be the same or different in different states and territories.
- In 2017, 3.7% of people had a hearing disability.ⁱⁱ
- 2014 data indicate that 1 in 59 children have an autism spectrum diagnosisⁱⁱⁱ, which is characterized by communication challenges.^{iv}
- In the 2016-2017 National Core Indicators data, 22% of participating people with disabilities preferred a means of communication other than speaking^v and 3% had a primary language other than English.^{vi}

In the AUCD network:

- Our trainees speak over 100 languages other than English. in their homes, and
- Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Hindi were the top four languages, with Korean and Mandarin tied as the fifth most common language spoken in the trainees' home.

In the AUCD Central Office (as of July 2019):

- About 30% of the staff speak a language other than English in the home.
- Spanish and American Sign Language are the top two languages used.

An inability to communicate and engage with and/or access information, services, and supports has resulted in significant physical, mental, and behavioral health disparities and socio-political, economic and educational disadvantages for people with disabilities that affect communication and people with LEP. For additional background on the consequences of language and communication barriers, please see Appendix B.

Everyone, including people with the most significant disabilities, communicates in some way and can be supported to communicate more effectively. To maximize participation and inclusion we must presume competence; we must assume that every person has something to say and act accordingly. Language and communication access can assist people with communications needs such as speech-language assistance or assistive technology to provide a layer of support for people who speak another language other than English or for people with a disability that affects their ability to communicate.

[Executive Order 13166](#) requires Federal agencies and those receiving federal funding to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with LEP, and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. AUCD receives federal funding to support our network and is committed to fulfilling the federal requirements through this Language and Communication Access Plan.

What is a Language and Communication Access Plan?

A language access plan is a document that details how to provide services to people with limited abilities to speak, understand, read, or write English. The plan will guide how AUCD engages and supports members of our network and the public with language and communication needs and will serve to evaluate how effective and easy to access our communication is.

While the focus of this plan is to improve AUCD's communication accessibility, we also hope that this process can serve as a model that our network members can use to develop their own language and communications access plans, specific to the state and territorial contexts within which they operate.

Section 2: Existing Language and Communication Access Resources

AUCD values all our employees and strives to attract and retain diverse staff who are committed to the mission of the organization, including providing accommodations and ensuring accessibility. Within our diverse staff, we have a range of existing language and communication skills and expertise to draw on. It is AUCD's intent to create a cooperative, collaborative, stimulating, and supportive atmosphere in which employees may work, and to aid and encourage our employees to reach their full potential.

Language Access Support for Staff

Language Access Services Currently Offered/Used by AUCD:

Comprehensive Language Support

- **Ad Astra** 301-408-4242 (P) <https://ad-astrainc.com/>
Interprets for over 200 languages, including Spanish and American Sign Language
Spanish Interpreter: \$60/hour
All Other Languages: \$75/hour
American Sign Language: \$95/hour
Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART): \$120/hour
Video Relay Interpreter (VRI) American Sign Language: \$1.70/minute
Over the phone interpreter (OPI):
 - Spanish: \$0.75/minute
 - All Other Languages: \$0.95/minute

Interpreter Resources:

- **Sorenson-** communityinterpreting@sorenson.com,
www.scis.com/request 800-659-4783
\$90.00/hr. (2 hr. minimum)
- **Gallaudet Interpreting Services**
<https://www.gallaudet.edu/gallaudet-interpreting-service>
gis@gallaudet.edu 202-651-5199
\$95.00/hr. (2 hr minimum)
- **Kyle Duarte-** <https://kduarte.com/>
interpreter@kduarte.com (202) 525-6803
\$80.00/hr. (2hr minimum)

Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART):

- **Caption First, Inc** info@captionfirst.com \$150.00/hr.
- **Caption Pros** <https://captionpros.net/> \$150.00/hr.
- **ACS An AI-Media Company:** <https://www.acscaptions.com/> \$115.00/hr.

Braille:

- **American Council for the Blind** <https://acb.org/>
Sharon Lovering: slovering@acb.org

Audio Descriptions:

- **Access by 3Play Media** <https://www.3playmedia.com/>
Ben Wright: ben@3playmedia.com
- **Block by Block Creative** <https://www.blockbyblockcreative.com/>
Jordan Melograna jordan@blockbyblockcreative.com

Screen Reader Support

- **JAWS:** Jen Tuell and Solomon Lissanu have JAWS installed for staff review
- **UK Human Development Institute**
Patti Singleton, patti.naber@uky.edu
- **Level Access**
Brittany Rosato, brittany.rosato@levelaccess.com

Website Accessibility Review

- **WebAIM** <https://webaim.org/>
- **WAVE Accessibility Checker Tool:** <https://wave.webaim.org/>

Plain Language Adaptation

See Plain Language Adaptation Resources (Appendix C)

- **UK Human Development Institute**
Patti Singleton, patti.naber@uky.edu

Translation

See Spanish Language Materials Development Protocol (Appendix D)

- **Language Innovations**
Brian Friedman: bfriedman@languageinnovations.com

Text Telephone (TTY) or Video Relay Services (VRS)

If the person is Deaf or Hard of Hearing, communicate with the individual using Text Telephone (TTY) or Video Relay Services (VRS). To use:

- **TTY:** Dial [711](tel:711) to automatically connect to a TTY operator. The number is free of charge and can be dialed from any telephone and anywhere in the United States
- **VRS:**
 - A communication assistant can be reached through a television or computer with a video camera device and high-speed internet connection.
 - A voice telephone user can also initiate a VRS call by calling a VSR center, usually through a toll-free number. Dial 1-866-327-8877 from any video phone and you will be connected to Sorenson video interpreters. This service is free of charge and offered in Spanish.

Section 3: A Plan/Do/Study/Act Methodology for Improving AUCD's Language and Communications Access

Implementation of AUCD's Language and Communication Access Plan will utilize an iterative Plan/Do/Study/Act (PDSA) cycle^{vii}. The PDSA cycle involves

- conducting needs assessments to identify and prioritize network communication and language access needs and then designing a strategy to address priority needs (Plan),
- implementing a small-scale test of the strategy (Do),
- evaluating the impact of the efforts (Study),
- and adjusting the plan for a larger scale implementation (Act).

Plan: Identification of Language and Communication Needs / Needs Assessment

This effort will require regular review of the ongoing needs of the members of the network and members of the public served through AUCD.

2019 Initial Plan

Goal: AUCD will work with project advisory committees to evaluate the needs of AUCD network members and relevant members of the public and prioritize a specific set of no more than 3 language and communication needs to address with targeted interventions on an annual basis in advance of the AUCD conference.

1. Objective: AUCD will conduct three (3) Zoom webinars and an in-person meeting with the language access advisory committee to finalize the language access plan, establish a needs assessment protocol, and identify priority need(s) by November 2019.
2. Objective: AUCD staff will be trained on the implementation of the assessment protocol.
3. Objective: AUCD staff will implement the needs assessment protocol on an ongoing basis to gather data related to the language and communications needs in our evolving network.

For example, AUCD may utilize a tracking system for Information and Referral calls that we receive from people with LEP, we may do an evaluation of the languages recorded in the NIRS directory, we may incorporate language or communications access questions in event registrations, or we may conduct one or more direct surveys of network members to identify that there is a more significant need in a specific community or set of communities. Questions will be designed that assess individual language and communication access needs, as well as identified needs in improving access in the communities served by network members.

2019-2020 Update: The Priority Needs identified for this year are Spanish Language and Plain Language.

The needs assessment protocol recommended by the Language and Communication Access Coordinators (LAAC) are for AUCD staff and programs to include the following two questions in as many evaluation protocols as possible across all aspects of our work:

- i. Do you or your center/program have language or communication access needs that need to be addressed to ensure full inclusion? Yes / No

If yes, please describe your language or communication access need.

- ii. Do you or your center/program have strengths or resources in language and communication access that AUCD could leverage in our effort to model diversity, equity, and inclusion? Yes / No

If yes, please describe your language or communication access strengths or resources.

Sarah DeMaio (sdemaio@aucd.org) will gather results of these questions in July 2020, to analyze before soliciting additional network feedback.

2020-2021 Update: Spanish Language and Plain Language continue to be primary needs in the AUCD network based on in data gathered in the UCEDD Resource Center's (URC's) annual evaluation data.

The Plain Language Advisory Group prioritized improving staff training, plain language adaptation of introductory content and access to self-advocacy resources. [Plain Language resource landing page](#) is available. A staff training was held in September 2020 and a plain language toolkit was developed for staff (see Appendix C). The Plain Language Advisory Group began work on developing a shared definition for plain language for the AUCD Network.

The Spanish Language Caucus prioritized translation of introductory content (e.g., the AUCD and URC brochures, the trainee orientation modules, and the language and communications plan) and they prioritized creating landing page for Spanish language resources. [A Spanish Language landing page](#) is available, and a Spanish language translation protocol was developed (see Appendix D). Looking forward the Spanish Language Caucus has recommended focusing on dissemination of Spanish language content and partnership with Latinx organizations.

2021-2022 Update:

Goals for the year to be determined.

Do: Development and Implementation of Language Access Interventions to Address needs of Target Constituencies

Goal: For each priority language and communications need identified, AUCD will work with a separate workgroup of network members (and AUCD staff when available) who have lived experience with the specified need to identify and develop resources, design programmatic supports, and establish protocols for AUCD staff to use in overcoming the barrier to access and improve engagement.

1. Objective: AUCD will recruit and facilitate the language access need caucus.

2. Objective: The caucus will develop a set of goals, priorities, timelines and responsibilities to address gaps in language and/or communication access within the scope of AUCD's work.
3. Objective: AUCD will provide a language assistance training to AUCD central office staff and new hires as needed, which will include receiving the resources; being oriented to any newly developed language access protocols; learning about relevant federal, state, local and organizational policies; and implementing the programmatic changes needed to increase access and remove barriers to participation for the target community.

For example, the workgroup/caucus could develop a standard script or recording to address Information and Referral requests; they could prioritize information sharing and develop a separate webinar series or resource directory in their own language; they could prioritize rights education and develop a "Your Right to an Interpreter/Speak" poster (See Appendix E for an example of this type of document); or they could prioritize mentoring and relationship development and create a regular in-person meeting at the AUCD conference.

Each language caucus will have a staff liaison who will serve as a Language and Communication Access Coordinators

2021-2022 Update: Language and Communication Access Coordinators

Spanish Language: Jeanette Cordova (jcordova@aucd.org)

Plain Language: Katie Johnson ([kjohson@aucd.org](mailto:kjohnson@aucd.org)) and Liz Weintraub (lweintraub@aucd.org).

Study: Monitoring and Evaluating the Effectiveness and Effects of the Language and Communications Access Interventions In Development and Maintenance

Goal: Interventions will be assessed through formal and informal means to evaluate their effectiveness at accomplishing stated goals; the effort required from AUCD staff; and the immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes.

1. Objectives TBD.
2. To allow for comprehensive input, AUCD will establish a committee or workgroup that will include executive, program, and operations staff, and members of AUCD's network.

Measure: AUCD's designated language access coordinators will conduct an annual review and document feedback from team members on ways to improve the language access plan.

Act: Adopt, Adapt, Amplify or Abandon Resources and Strategies based on the Evaluation Metrics

Goal: Plan for a new cycle of improvements by rolling out resources and strategies to the broader network, modifying resources and strategies for additional study, adding new resources related to the current priority need or implementing those resources for a new language need.

1. Annually in August-October, AUCD will solicit feedback from Project Advisory Committees to evaluate the outcomes of the intervention monitoring and make decisions about how to proceed with existing resources and strategies, about whether the priority needs for language access have remained the same or changed, and about how to improve revise the language access plan for the next PDSA cycle.

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Click on [AUCD](#) link to visit the acronym dictionary on disability terms.

Appendix B: Communication Imperative from the proposed National Resource Center on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)



Communication
Imperative.pdf

Appendix C: Plain Language Adaptation Resources

- [Plain Language Toolkit](#)
- [ABCs of Plain Language](#)
- [Icon Guide](#)
- [Other Plain Language Resources](#)

Appendix D: Spanish Language Translation Resources

- [Spanish Translation Protocol](#)

Appendix E:

[Sample](#) Know Your Rights to an Interpreter Poster

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