

Nassau County Needs Language Access Now

#LanguageAccessNassau

It's been two years since Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano signed Executive Orders 67 & 72, promising interpretation and translation at county agencies, yet little progress has been made. Many programs were already required to provide language access under federal law and have failed to meet their legal responsibilities.

Language Access Saves Lives

Language access at county agencies ensures that everyone in our communities has meaningful access to essential services and programs such as:

- **Police protection**
- **Healthcare**
- **Social services**
- **Emergency assistance**
- **Services for the elderly**
- **Services for people with disabilities**

Hurricane Sandy clearly demonstrated the need for government agencies to be able to communicate with all people in crisis, regardless of language proficiency. Providing these services without discrimination makes us all more secure.

The Growing Need for Language Access

Over 130,000 Nassau County residents are "limited English proficient." Newly arrived immigrants are moving to Long Island at a growing rate. While many may speak, read, or understand *some* English, they may **experience difficulty understanding complex forms and instructions, or communicating clearly during times of crisis.**

Building Safe, Welcoming Communities

As our communities become more diverse, it's critical that the government meet the needs of everyone by removing barriers to communication and participation in local programs. All community members have the right to access government agencies and County services without experiencing delays, obstacles or insults. **County Executive Mangano has not kept his promise to serve all the people equally. He is in violation of his own county policy as well as federal civil rights requirements. Without language access, thousands of community members are being harmed.**

**Two years is too long to wait.
County Executive Mangano must live up to his promise now.**

Case Studies

In April 2015 and again in July, advocates attempted to access services in Nassau County in languages other than English, including Spanish, Haitian Creole, Mandarin Chinese, Korean and Russian. **The results were appalling.**

- Spanish and Korean speaking **callers to the Police Department were unable to receive any assistance.** One officer called a Spanish speaking caller "mami" and asked why she didn't speak English. Another caller was told, "If problema, you have to call 911." The **Office of Minority Affairs** was also unable to serve any callers who did not speak English. The **Office of Mental Health** hung up on several callers.
- An advocate who accompanied a Farsi speaking family to **the Nassau County Department of Social Services** to apply for Public Assistance requested an interpreter and was told, "**We don't do that.**" When they persisted in requesting language assistance, **the worker said they would have to come back another day.**
- Callers who spoke Haitian Creole, Chinese, Russian and Korean **were laughed at and hung up on.**

IN 60 ATTEMPTS TO GET LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE AT NASSAU COUNTY AGENCIES

ONLY 4 WERE SUCCESSFUL