



LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE REPORT

2022

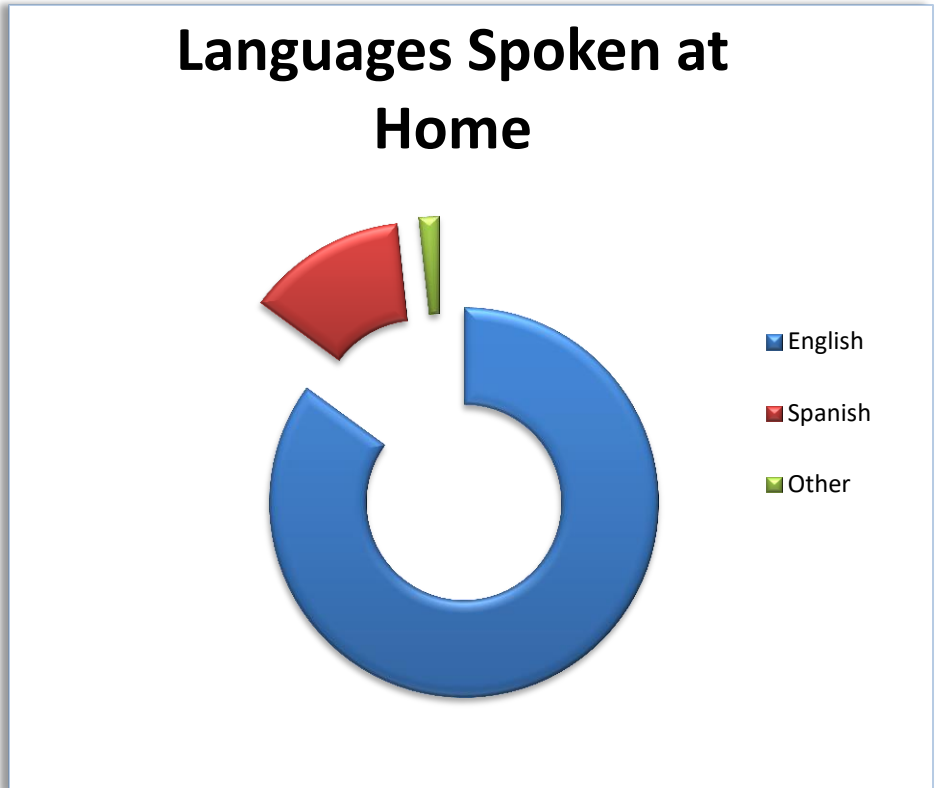
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30 Yaphank Avenue, Yaphank, New York 11980
Prepared by the Office of the Police Commissioner

A Message from the Language Access Coordinator

Thank you for taking an interest in the Suffolk County Police Department's Language Access Program.

The position of Language Access Coordinator (LAC) was instituted in 2014 as part of our Agreement with the United States Department of Justice.¹ As the LAC, I help develop language access policy and engage in strategic planning regarding the provision of language access services to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). I am also the custodian of the Department's Language Access Plan and oversee all aspects of its maintenance and implementation.

The LEP community in Suffolk County is comprised of Spanish-language speakers. Data from 2017-2021 indicates that the percentage of households in the County in which Spanish is spoken at home has remained around 14% from 2017-2021.²



This report will provide details on how Department meets the needs of our LEP community by providing quality language assistance.

Lieutenant Brian Loughlin
Commanding Officer
Community Relations Bureau

¹ https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2014/01/23/suffolk_agreement_1-13-14.pdf

² Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table?q=language+suffolk+county&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S1601> on March 1, 2023.

The Language Access Plan

The Department first issued a Language Access Plan (LAP) in 2013 at the direction of Suffolk County Executive Order #10-2012. That plan was soon expanded and then adopted into the Department's Rules and Procedures.³ In its present form the LAP:

- Informs the public of all language assistance services available to them
- Explains how LEP populations are identified and served
- Details the responsibilities of each level of command in providing language assistance services
- Gives precise instruction to line officers regarding when and how to provide language assistance services
- Establishes robust audit and compliance protocols
- Outlines language training curricula and the process of language skills certification

The LAP is designed to adapt to the changing needs and demographics of the County. It was built to allow flexibility in the deployment of language assistance services within well-defined parameters. It also serves as a reference document for all issues related to language access for both the Department and the public.⁴

The LAP is available on the Department's website in seven languages.⁵ It is reviewed and updated every Fall and re-issued the following Spring. No new additions were made during 2021.

Translation of Vital Documents

Since the inception of the LAP, the Department has identified certain documents within its system of records as "vital". These are documents which convey information of legal significance, without which core police services cannot be effectively rendered.

Vital Documents include forms such as "Family Offense Assistance & Court Procedures" (PDCS-7109p); "How to obtain a Police Report" (PDCS-8100i); and "Crime Victim Information Report" (PDCS-8105b). Also designated 'vital' are many policies, procedures and informational materials such as "Arrest of Non-U.S. Citizens and

³ Suffolk County Police Department Policy #333.

⁴ The U.S. DOJ has characterized the LAP as a "[strong](#)", "[comprehensive](#)" and "[solid](#)" policy.

⁵ <https://suffolkpd.org/Forms-and-Reports>

Persons with Dual Citizenship Procedure” (Policy 414); “Hate Crimes” (Policy 319); Bias Free Policing (Policy 401); and the “Suffolk County Traffic and Parking Violations Bureau” informational pamphlet. In addition to these documents, other materials are also translated and provided to LEP individuals and communities at events and upon request.

Twelve forms are currently available in multiple languages and over 40 documents, policies and guides are available in Spanish.⁶

Community Awareness

The Department conducts numerous education and awareness programs about language assistance services throughout the County every year. Most programs are delivered locally at venues such as churches, schools, libraries, police facilities, and advocacy centers. These programs inform members of the LEP community where and how they can engage the police in whatever language they are most comfortable using. Bilingual Department members and telephonic interpretation services are available at all of these events. During 2021 some of these meetings were held entirely in Spanish at certain venues.

In addition to live presentations, the Department disseminates print media throughout the County describing its language access resources. For example, members of the Community Relations Bureau distribute a five point “Did You Know” postcard which highlights an individual’s right to language services, and notifies them that a request for language services will not result in any inquiries about their immigration status.

The Department has also grown the followership of its Spanish language Facebook page to over 5600.⁷ The LAC and CRB also meet regularly with advocates and community groups to solicit a broad range of information, including the availability and quality of language assistance.

Language Proficiency Certification

Personnel assigned to CRB facilitate the certification of all Department Authorized Interpreters (DAI), and Bilingual Officers through Language Line Solutions. To date, the

⁶ <https://suffolkpd.org/Forms-and-Reports>

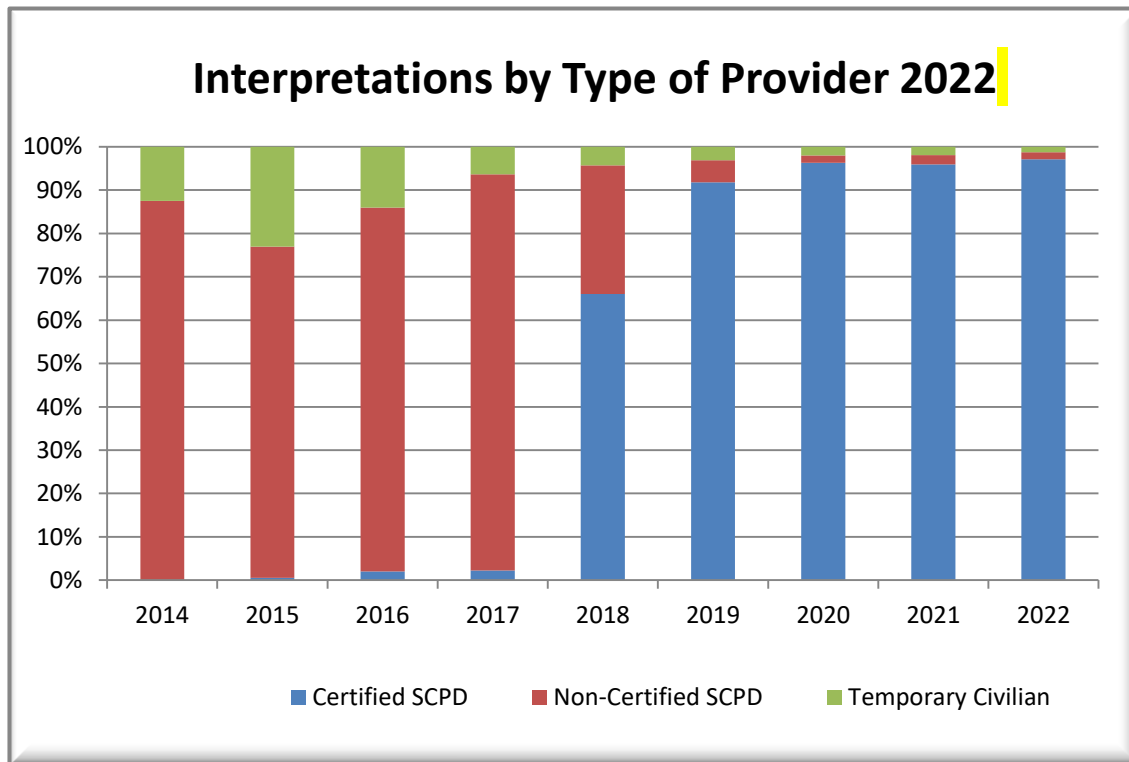
⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkPDEspanol/>

Department has certified sixty-eight (68) DAIs⁸, and two hundred and fifteen (215) sworn Bilingual Members.⁹

In addition to In-Service certifications, the Department has also hired a total of one hundred and twenty-two (122) police officers from the Spanish-Speaking civil service list since 2013, comprising just over 10% of all new hires.

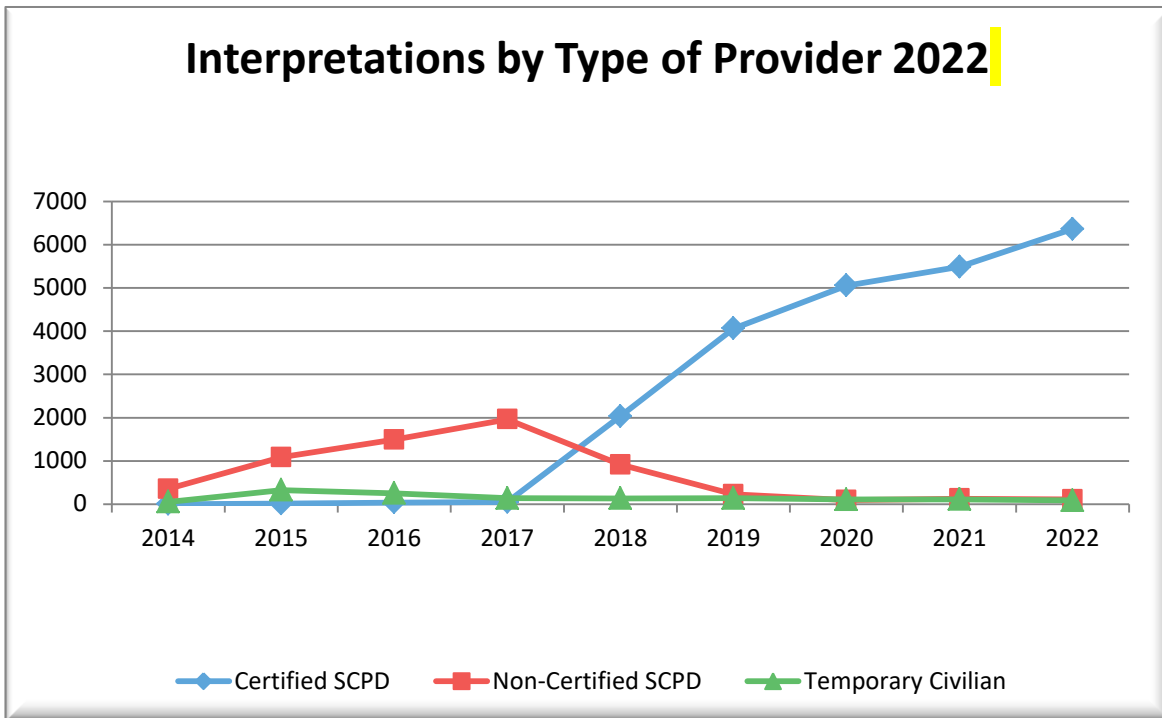
Language Assistance Tracking Database

The Language Assistance Tracking Database (LATD) is the repository for all language assistance records. It began as a storage database in 2014, but has been fully integrated into the Online Reporting System/Incident Reporting System for several years, and will continue as such as the Department transitions to NicheRMS365. The two visualizations below are built on a pull from the existing database, and display the continued success the Department has achieved in providing language assistance through the use of certified interpreters.



⁸ All in Spanish

⁹ 192 in Spanish



How Language Assistance is Provided

When 911 call-takers experience a language barrier, they immediately determine what language the caller is most comfortable using. Since the overwhelming number of LEP individuals in Suffolk County speak Spanish, the Department employs 9 Spanish-speaking Emergency Complaint Operators (ECO) in its call center. When these interpreters are off, or handling other calls, English-speaking ECOs utilize Language Line to communicate with Spanish-speaking callers.

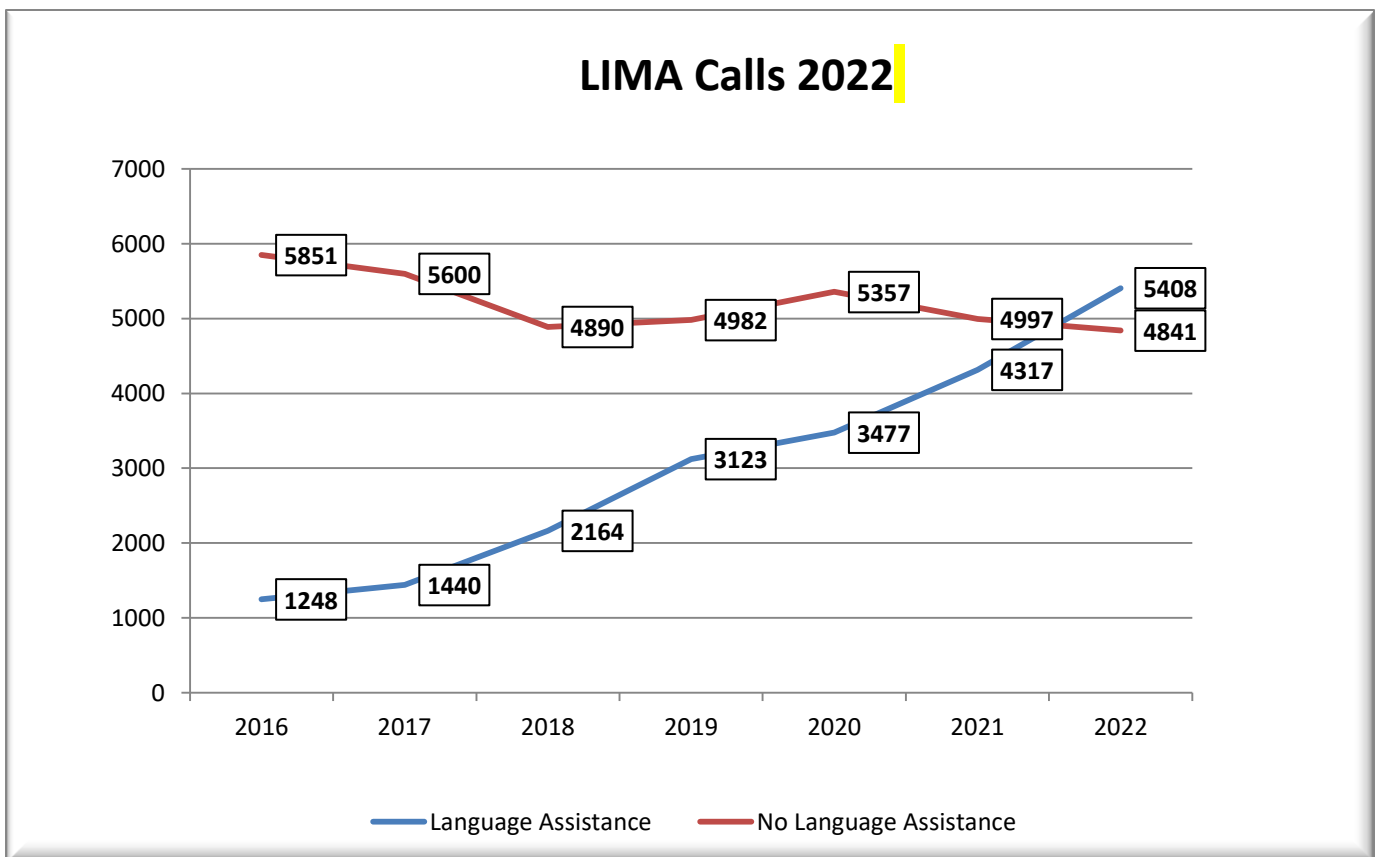
If language assistance is required to communicate with a caller, the ECO annotates the incident description with an “L”. In the phonetic alphabet “L” is “LIMA”, hence these calls for service are referred to as “LIMA calls”. All dispatched calls are broadcast over the police radio system and simultaneously sent to the assigned officer’s mobile computer. Whenever an officer receives a LIMA call, that officer, along with every other officer and supervisor listening to the same radio channel, becomes aware that the call might require language assistance. When the responding officer arrives on scene he or she determines exactly what assistance is required.

Frequently, calls which are designated LIMA by the 911 ECO, do not in fact require any language assistance when the officer arrives on scene. This occurs for a variety of reasons. Persons calling 911 are often in distress, and even those who have command

of the English language may default to their native tongue. ECOs also tend to err on the side of caution and designate calls as “LIMA” whenever they encounter any hesitancy in a caller’s English. At the scene, the party requiring police service is sometimes not the LEP person who called 911. Also, it is not uncommon for 911 callers to leave the scene altogether before an officer arrives. Finally, requests for medical assistance (“Aided Cases”) which are dispatched as LIMA calls do not require language assistance in the field unless the responding officer must provide police services.¹⁰

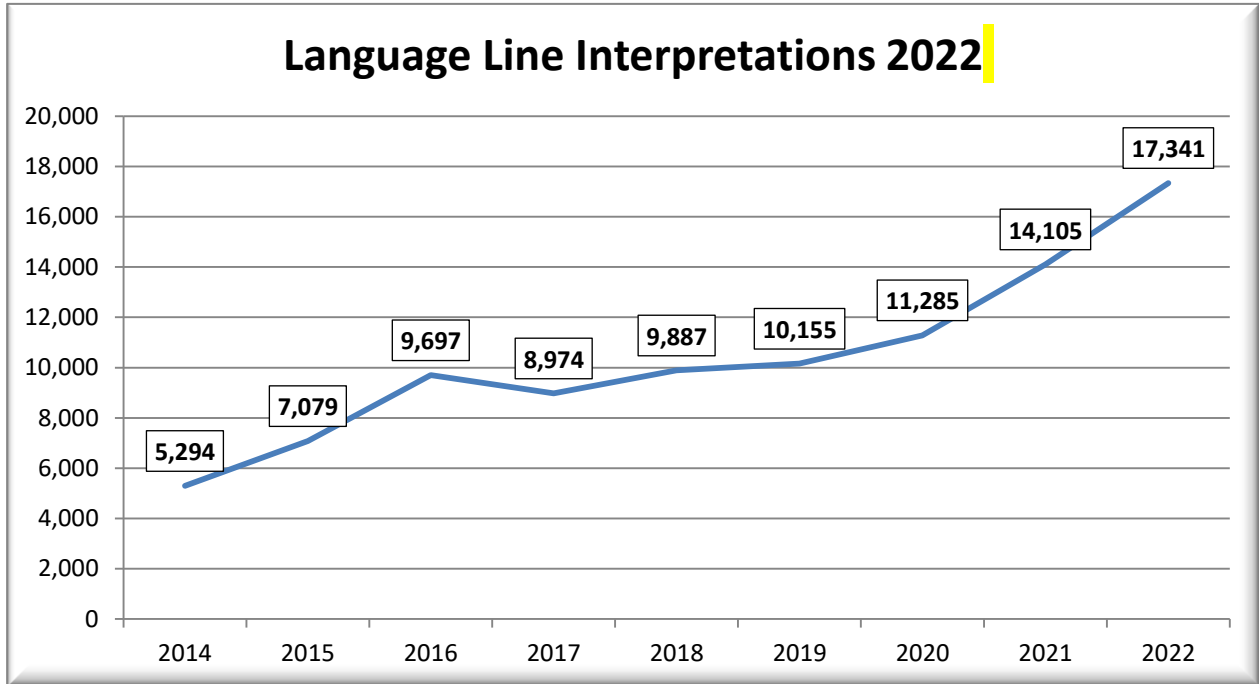
It is also important to note that not every phone call placed to 911 results in a dispatched call for service. Certain incidents, such as traffic accidents, structure fires, loud and/or large disputes and fireworks can generate many duplicate calls from passersby. These duplicate calls are all combined (“voided”) into a single incident number which is then dispatched to officers in the field. None of the duplicate calls that are designated “LIMA” before they are voided receive any language assistance, which can skew the data set.

In 2022 approximately 10,249 LIMA calls were dispatched by the 911 call center. Of those calls, approximately 5408 actually required some form of language assistance.



¹⁰ Police units are dispatched with Fire and Rescue units simultaneously on aided calls to ensure rapid response.

Officers delivering language assistance services always seek in-person interpreters first as a matter of policy. When an interpreter is not available, officers then utilize the Language Line telephonic service. Use of Language Line increased along with overall interpretations in 2022 with another record-setting number of calls.¹¹



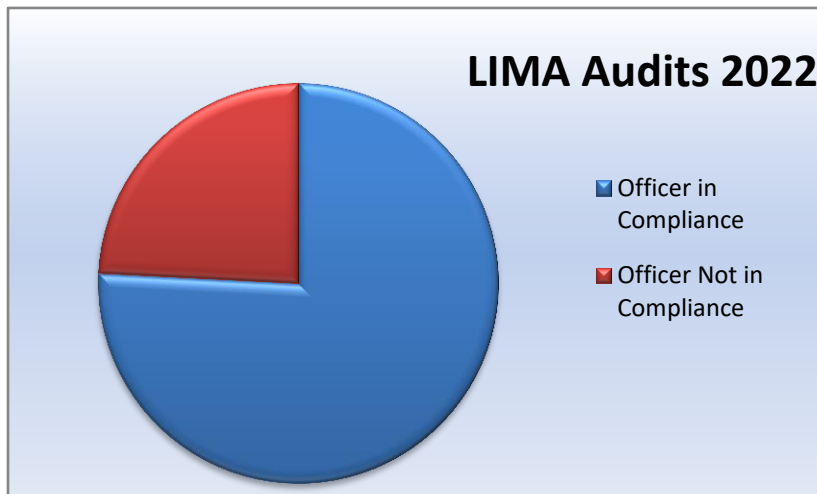
Monitoring the Delivery of Services

Oversight measures have evolved since the LAP was first incorporated into policy in 2014. Precinct-level oversight remains a key aspect to the program, but in 2022, responsibility for subsequent action was transferred from the Chief of Patrol's Office to Internal Affairs.¹² Following that change, Internal Affairs is now tasked with conducting monthly audits to determine if language assistance is provided in accordance with policy.

During 2022, investigators reviewed 1583 Lima calls and conducted 62 interviews of 911 callers. Information obtained from those callers indicated that 47 of the 62 callers had received assistance according to policy. Of the remaining 15, four calls were not reported properly, eight involved the improper use of a temporary interpreter, and three

¹¹ Language Line statistics include the use of Language Line in all settings, not just in response to 911 calls.

¹² Department General Order 23-04, amending Policy 333.4.3.



involved a failure to provide required assistance. As a result of the audits, two Internal Affairs cases were opened. As of this writing one is still pending and the other resulted in substantiated charges against two officers.

2023 Language Assistance Goals

Our goal for the current year is to maintain a continuous upward trend in compliance throughout the Department. The significant improvement experienced over the past four years confirms that the Department’s training and oversight initiatives are working. We will continue these efforts, leveraging new technologies to increase efficiency. In 2023 we will bring all our Tableau© data dashboards back online as the County and Department fully recover from the data intrusion of September 2022.

In addition to these planned advances in administration, the Department will also expand the number of Spanish-speaking officers in the field due to continued hiring through 2023.

