

# NCAPA COVID-19 Resource: *Getting Information in Your Language*



## You can get information in your preferred language from the government and public service providers

Federal, state, and local governments are required to help people receive information in a language they can understand, including sign language. This requirement includes unemployment agencies, schools, courts, and many hospitals and public health programs that receive federal funding. This can include companies that contract with or provide services on behalf of the government.

At the federal level, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 13166, and other regulations require the federal government and entities receiving assistance from the federal government to provide “meaningful access” to the programs, services, and information those entities provide. Meaningful access means accurate, timely, and effective communication, regardless of one’s level of English proficiency.

Many states and local government entities also have laws that require language access.

## If I don’t get help and continue to face barriers to language assistance, what can I do?

Any individual or organization can file a language access complaint. For help with filing a complaint, consider connecting with a community group or legal aid organization. Filing a language access complaint is NOT like filing a lawsuit. To pursue a lawsuit, please consult with a lawyer.

## Where to file a complaint

1. The [Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section](#). This is the office charged with handling complaints of discrimination, including those involving language access, by programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. [File here.](#)
2. The civil rights office of the relevant federal agency. [Find a list here.](#) (If it is not clear which agency is involved, the complaint can be filed with DOJ FCS, as noted above).
3. If the matter involves a state agency, file with your state’s Attorney General or the state agency that enforces civil rights laws in your state.

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## *Getting Information in Your Language (cont.)*



### When filing a complaint, it should include:

1. The organization/agency where the issue occurred
2. Details about the problem you saw or encountered:
  - For example, what document or website was not translated, what program or service was sought and what happened when you sought language support.
  - If possible, include dates, names, and other specifics.

The complaint does not have to be in a particular format and may be submitted through a simple email message. You can get help from a non-profit organization or legal aid office.

### Is there anything else I should do?

Inform the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) about the issue so that AAPI-serving advocacy organizations can track the problem. Fill out the form at the AAPI Emergency Response Network website, which is maintained by NCAPA: [www.aapiern.org](http://www.aapiern.org)

### Resources

- [U.S. Government website about language access laws and where to file a complaint:](#)
- Language identification cards. [Show your language to get an interpreter: "I Speak" cards](#)
- File a complaint with the [U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Federal Coordination and Compliance Section](#). More information is available about filing reports with the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division at <https://civilrights.justice.gov/#your-rights>



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