

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/prea-compliant-language-access-plan-for-incarcerated-people>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Language access means ensuring that people who have limited or no English language proficiency or are Deaf or hard of hearing are able to access information, programs, and services at a level equal to English-proficient hearing people. Providing language access to incarcerated victims of sexual abuse honors their humanity and worth in the wake of an experience that may have left them feeling stripped of both. Drawing on Vera's Center on Victimization and Safety's work on the Office for Victims of Crime-funded Translating Justice Initiative, this guide offers concrete steps for how correctional agencies can craft language access plans and engage interpreters and translators that are consistent with the requirements in the *National Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape* (commonly referred to as the PREA Standards).

Creating language access plans for PREA-related educational materials and services will contribute to safer correctional facilities and increase the likelihood that incarcerated people with limited English proficiency will report and seek help if they experience sexual victimization.

Language access is a matter of human dignity. It is not just about hiring interpreters or translators, but about placing value on understanding someone's culture and experience in the world.

A language access plan is a document that maps out how an agency will provide information and services to, and engage with, people who are limited English proficient.

Language access plans should encompass both spoken languages and sign languages, like American Sign Language (ASL).

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