

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/finding-solutions-at-the-ccdo-conference>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

On July 14th, I was in Tampa, Florida, moderating a panel on *Solutions to the Challenges of Providing Services to Individuals with Limited English Proficiency* at the 2009 [Community Capacity Development Office](#) (CCDO) national conference. The panel included an attorney from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, Office for Civil Rights, and representatives from three police departments. The three law enforcement agencies on the panel were the Boise Police Department, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, and the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department. They were profiled in Vera's February 2009 report, [Bridging the Language Divide](#).

The audience, comprising law enforcement chiefs, command staff, line officers, government workers, and social service providers, asked interesting, thought-provoking questions about agency operations, staffing, budgeting, and the limited English proficient (LEP) populations each police department serves. Two questions dealing with language access stood out: how can an agency certify that a bilingual individual truly was bilingual and how can an agency gauge if an interpreter was interpreting correctly.

In response to both questions, all three agency representatives stated that they had developed their programs with mechanisms to vet staff for quality. These mechanisms include:

When we ended our discussion, the three agency representatives reiterated that there is no one solution. They encouraged the audience members to develop solutions that made sense for their respective work, because providing services to LEP individuals is not just good practice: it helps law enforcement solve crime and protect the public safety.

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