

Bloomberg Expands Translations In Agencies - Correction Appended

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 **Correction Appended**

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Body

Navigating the city's bureaucracy can be a daunting endeavor for the nearly three million immigrants who live in New York. Aside from a lack of knowledge about the way government works and the services it provides, one fundamental barrier has stood in their way: language.

There are an estimated 170 foreign languages spoken in New York City, and in nearly half of all households, English is not the primary language, according to the census in 2000. And given that the city receives more than 20 million calls from residents each year, officials said, communication can often be a challenge.

On Tuesday, Mayor Michael R. **Bloomberg** ordered the city's more than 100 **agencies** to provide language assistance in six foreign languages: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Korean, Italian and French Creole. The order requires, for the first time, that the **agencies** follow the same standard when providing **translation** and interpretation to New Yorkers who do not speak English.

Immigrant advocates and city officials say it is the most comprehensive order of its kind in the country. The mayor refused to be specific about how much the services will cost, saying only that it was a "relatively small" amount given the size of the city's budget. He added: "This executive order will make our city more accessible, while helping us become the most inclusive municipal government in the nation."

"The fundamental basis of government is its interaction with its citizens," the mayor said before signing the executive order at City Hall on Tuesday. "If people don't know what we do, don't know what they should do, what the law requires them to do, don't know how to get services, all the money that we're spending providing those services, providing those laws, is meaningless."

The order requires that **agencies translate** essential public documents, pamphlets and forms in the six languages. But its reach is broader, as it allows for the use of a telephone-based service that can link immigrants with interpreters who speak Urdu, Hindi, Arabic and dozens of others less-common languages.

Chung-Hwa Hong, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella organization that works with immigrants and refugees in the state, called the order "a landmark step toward inclusion." Councilwoman Rosie Mendez of Manhattan, who has pushed for more **translation** services for public housing dwellers, said it was a "bold and necessary action" to increasing immigrants' access to city government.

The types of services each **agency** will provide will depend on how much each of them interacts with the public. The **agencies** have until Jan. 1 to submit a plan detailing how much **translation** and interpretation service they will need to suit their needs.

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Immigration advocates and some elected officials have tried for more than 10 years to get the city to provide language assistance to non-English speaking New Yorkers, with limited success. In 2001, a federal judge approved a settlement through which the city agreed to make available Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic copies of food stamp applications in welfare offices around New York, as well as translation of these documents into languages spoken by at least 100 clients who use any given office.

In recent years, the Education Department's translation unit has been expanded to provide parents with information in eight languages. The city's 311 customer-service center has allowed interactions in 170 languages since it was formed in 2003. And the Office of Emergency Management has offered audio translations of some public documents to those who cannot speak English and are visually impaired, a spokeswoman for Mr. Bloomberg said.

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Correction

An article on Wednesday about an executive order requiring that all New York City agencies provide translations and interpretation services in six foreign languages referred incorrectly to a service offered by the Office of Emergency Management. It provides audio recordings of some public documents for the visually impaired, but the recordings are in English; they are not translated.

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