

# Introduction: **Access to Justice**

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and  
Access to Protection Orders

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# Goal

- To provide an educational tool to all those who work with or assist limited English proficient (LEP) petitioners with protection orders.

# Contents

1. Domestic Violence Dynamics
2. Overview of Protection Order Process
3. Culture and Language
4. Communication with LEP Persons
5. Resources for Assisting the LEP Person

# LEP in America

- 18 percent of the U.S. adult population speaks a language other than English at home
- Over 25 percent of the adult population residing in California (39%), New Mexico (38%), Texas (31%), Hawaii (29%), New York (28%), New Jersey (26%), and Arizona (25%) speak a language other than English at home
- Over 300 languages are spoken in the United States

# Background

- National study conducted by the National Center for State Courts (see Module 5)
- Some of the barriers to meaningful access:
  - Courts have inadequate interpreter resources
  - Very limited diversity in languages served by interpreters
  - Courts' relationships with community-based organizations are non-existent or weak.
  - Courts do not have the capacity to provide interpreters outside the courtroom

*In conclusion, courts have serious challenges in providing access to limited English proficient (LEP) protection order petitioners, especially those who speak languages less commonly spoken in the local community.*

# Promising Practices for the Courts

- Know the language and ethnicity of individuals who seek protection orders.
- Create a court environment that encourages LEP individuals to access the court's services.
- Ensure the quality and professionalism of court interpretation.

# Promising Practices for the Courts

- Work collaboratively with community-based organizations to achieve a coordinated community response to the language assistance and service needs of LEP communities.
- Participate in and use national networks to expand resources for providing appropriate language assistance services.

# How to Use this Medium

1. Fill in your knowledge gaps.
2. Use the medium as a conversation starter between courts and community-based organizations.
3. Distribute the resources in Module 5 to colleagues and the bench.
4. Use this tool to develop a plan to improve services.
5. Educate those around you who work with LEP persons.

*To a minority for whom English is not the primary language, language barriers only heighten the desperation that justice is simply beyond reach, no matter what the truth or consequences.*

-Florida Supreme Court, Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Bias

# **In our next module**

Domestic Violence Dynamics

