



Language Access at the New York City Human Resources Administration

What questions did the audit look at?

- ▶ Does the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) comply with language access laws and guidelines?
- ▶ Do HRA's language access services meet the needs of the Non-English Language Preference (NELP) population?
- ▶ Does the NELP population have access to the same range of services as the English-speaking population?

Why does it matter for New Yorkers?

According to the New York City Department of City Planning, almost half of all New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home, and almost 25% are not proficient in English. Since 2003, the City has worked to enhance language access through laws, executive orders, and guidelines.

HRA is the largest municipal social services agency in the country, providing access to benefits and cash assistance to more than 3 million New Yorkers. According to the agency, approximately 30% of its clients identify as NELP. For this reason, language access is an absolute priority for the agency.

The audit found that HRA has done a commendable job providing language access services, with one exception. The agency generally complied with translation standards and guidelines and that NELP clients have the same access to services as those who speak English. A survey we conducted found that most NELP clients were satisfied with the level of language access HRA provided.

However, the audit did find problems with the translation feature on the ACCESS HRA website—a public platform that allows clients to apply and recertify for SNAP and other cash assistance programs. The website is accessible in just 6 of 10 designated NELP languages, with four (Bengali, Urdu, French, and Polish) unavailable. To ensure equitable access for all New Yorkers, HRA should correct this flaw.

What changes did the agency commit to make following the audit?

- ▶ HRA agreed to update the translation feature on its ACCESS HRA website to include four languages that were previously omitted.

AUDIT FINDINGS



HRA provides adequate language access to NELP clients.



NELP clients expressed satisfaction with HRA's language access services.



The ACCESS HRA website has limited translation features.



Audit Recommendations

Agency Response

1

Update the default translation feature on its ACCESS HRA website to include Bengali, Urdu, French, and Polish, to ensure the top 10 designated NYC NELP languages are available.

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