

HEADS UP

UPDATES AND ISSUES

DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS



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Understanding the Limited English Proficiency [LEP] Federal Mandate in Extension Programs

Utah State University Extension is a recipient of USDA federal funding and therefore is obligated to take reasonable steps to ensure that those with Limited English Proficiency [LEP] have meaningful access to the programs, services and information provided by Extension. More than 250,000 individuals in Utah speak a language other than English. Of this total more than 150,000 speak Spanish as their primary language with about 50,000 of them not speaking English well or not at all. These demographics reflect Utah language use data from 2004 and are projected to be significantly higher when the 2010 US Census figures are released. Extension programs must be available to an ever increasing diverse population. Different treatment of these diverse populations based on a person's inability to speak, read, write or understand English may be a type of national origin discrimination forbidden in the *Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act*. "No person in the United States shall on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination, under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." – 42 U.S.C. 2000d.

Executive Order 13166 directs programs such as USU Extension to improve access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency. Specifically Extension is to (1) have a policy which details how recipients with LEP can access programs; (2) improve the language accessibility of Extension programs; and (3) break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance across county and state programs. Extension units can meet this obligation by identifying individuals who need language assistance and then identify ways in which language assistance can be provided. This individualized assessment of potential LEP individuals should include: (1) an analysis of the number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be served or are likely to be encountered by the program; (2) the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program; (3) the nature and importance of the program activity, or service provided by the program to the individuals lives and; (4) identify the resources available to meet the LEP obligation.

It is important that Extension units/individuals document the efforts made to meet the objectives of this federal mandate. In addition to tracking the number of those LEP individuals served, documentation of curricula resources developed and other efforts made should be available for review and plans to be part of one's annual report in Digital Measures. Extension professionals and staff have a role in meeting this civil rights mandate and should plan activities and programs that will meet the needs of LEP individuals who at the present time, may not be served well.

"Utah State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution."