



LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE REPORT

2019

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30 Yaphank Avenue, Yaphank, New York 11980
Prepared by the Office of the Police Commissioner

Message from the Language Access Coordinator

Thank you for taking an interest in the Suffolk County Police Department's Language Access Program. As the population of our County continues to increase in diversity, the number of residents who speak languages other than English has risen dramatically. The Police Department has taken significant steps in recent years to ensure that its members can communicate with non-English speaking populations and thereby provide the same level of service to all Suffolk residents.

The Department created the position of Language Access Coordinator (LAC) in 2014 to engage in policy development and strategic planning regarding the provision of language access services to persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The LAC is the custodian of the Department's Language Access Plan and oversees all aspects of its creation, maintenance and implementation.

The LEP landscape in Suffolk County is dominated by Spanish-language speakers. Roughly 14% of the population report Spanish as the primary language spoken at home.¹ Fewer than one percent report either Mandarin or Cantonese, and another segment under one percent report Italian.

Language Spoken at Home (2018)



Having a single predominant non-English language allows the Department to focus its efforts on fielding Spanish-speaking interpreters and bilingual members in first line law enforcement positions. Several officers are also fluent in other languages, and all have access to telephonic and videotelephonic interpreters in over 240 different languages.

As the Department embarks on a new decade it remains committed to eliminating communication barriers and providing the best possible service to all.

Lieutenant Paul Bowden
Commanding Officer
Community Relations Bureau

¹ DataUSA. (2018). Suffolk County, NY-Diversity-Non-English Speakers. Retrieved from <https://datausa.io/>

The Language Access Plan

The Department first issued a Language Access Plan (LAP) in 2013 at the direction of Suffolk County Executive Order #10-2012. After entering into a Settlement Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), that plan was expanded and then adopted into the Department's Rules and Procedures.² In its present form the LAP:

- Informs the public of all language assistance services available to them
- Explains how LEP populations are identified and served
- Details the responsibilities of each level of command in providing language assistance services
- Gives precise instruction to line officers regarding when and how to provide language assistance services
- Establishes robust audit and compliance protocols
- Outlines language training curricula and the process of language skills certification

The LAP is a living document that adapts to the ever-changing needs and demographics of the Police District. It is designed to allow flexibility in the deployment of language assistance services while simultaneously requiring strict adherence to protocols regarding the delivery of those services. It serves as a central reference for all issues related to language access for both the Department and the public.³

The LAP is available on the Department's website in seven languages.⁴ It is reviewed and updated every Fall and re-issued the following Spring. Highlights from the 2020 update include:

- Adoption of a Precinct-level audit procedure of all services rendered to 911 callers based upon quarterly review provided in Lima Reports;
- A strict prohibition against using children as interpreters unless no other option is available in an emergency situation;

² Suffolk County Police Department Rules and Procedures Chapter 26, §5.

³ The U.S. DOJ has characterized the LAP as a strong, comprehensive and solid policy since 2017 (https://suffolkpd.org/Portals/59/scpd_pdfs/infoandpolicies/DOJCompliance1_19_2017.pdf)

⁴ <https://suffolkpd.org/Home/LanguageAccessPlaninMultipleLanguages.aspx>

Translation of Vital Documents

Since the inception of the LAP, the Department has identified certain documents within its system of records as “vital”. These are documents which convey information of legal significance, without which core police service cannot be effectively rendered.

Vital Documents include forms such as “Family Offense Assistance & Court Procedures” (PDCS-7109p); “How to obtain a Police Report” (PDCS-8100i); and “Crime Victim Information Report” (PDCS-8105b). Also designated ‘vital’ are many policies, procedures and informational materials such as “Arrest of Non-U.S. Citizens and Persons with Dual Citizenship Procedure” (Rules and Procedures Chapter 16, §4); “Hate Crimes” (Rules and Procedures Chapter 24, §6); and the “Suffolk County Traffic and Parking Violations Bureau” informational pamphlet. In addition to these documents, other materials are also translated and provided to various LEP individuals and communities according to need.

Community Awareness

The Department conducts many education and awareness programs about language assistance services throughout the County every year. Most programs are delivered locally at venues, such as churches, schools, libraries and advocacy centers. They inform members of the LEP community where and how they can engage the police in whatever language they are most comfortable using. Of course, bilingual Department members and telephonic interpretation services are available at all of these events.

In addition to live presentations, the Department disseminates print media throughout the County describing its language access resources. For example, members of the Community Relations Bureau distribute a five point “Did You Know” post card which highlights an individual’s right to language services, and notifies them that a request for language services will not result in any inquiries about their immigration status. The card is presently available in Spanish, Haitian Creole and Polish.

The LAC and CRB also meet regularly with advocates and community groups to solicit input regarding the Language Access Plan to ensure that it is focused on the needs of all LEP communities. School districts demographics are also tracked by the LAC in order to identify relevant and emerging language populations. The LAC also analyzes billing documents from telephonic services and information collected by the United States Census Bureau.

Language Proficiency Certification

The CRB facilitates the certification of all Department Authorized Interpreters (DAI), and Bilingual Officers. To date, the Department has certified forty (40) DAIs⁵, and one hundred and fifty-one (151) certified sworn Bilingual Members.⁶

In addition to In-Service certifications, the Department has also hired a total of seventy-nine (79) police officers from the Spanish-Speaking civil service list since 2013, comprising just over 10% of all new hires. The Department anticipates hiring approximately 20 additional officer from the next Spanish-speaking list.

Language Assistance Tracking Database

The Language Assistance Tracking Database (LATD) is the repository for all language assistance by the Department. It began as a rudimentary storage database in 2014 and is now fully integrated into the Online Reporting System/Incident Reporting System.

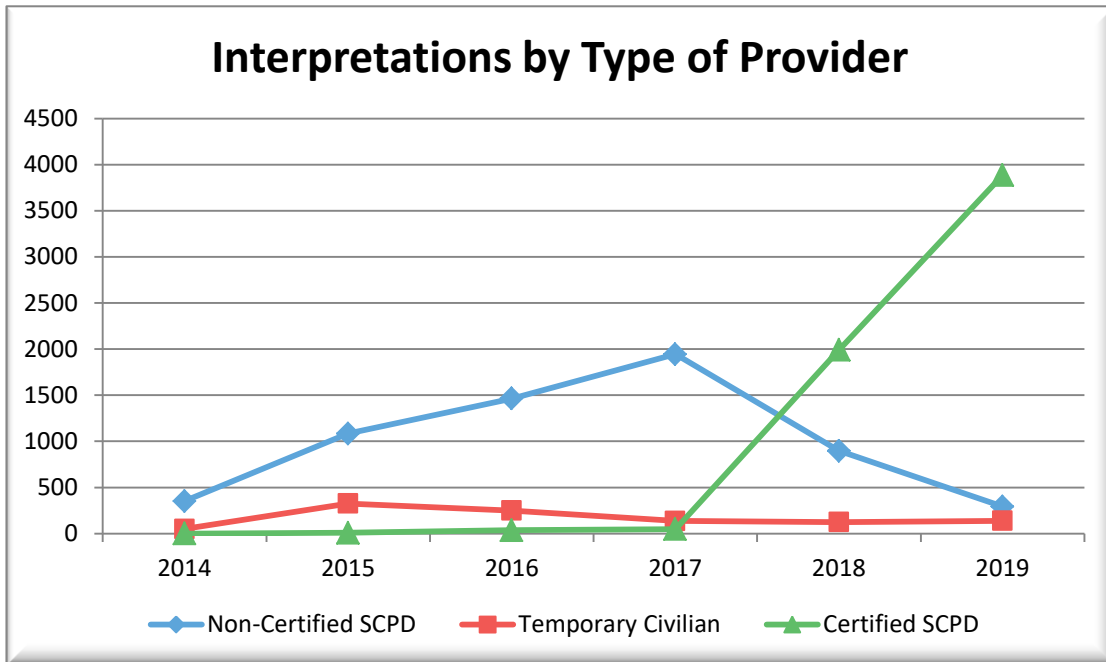
In April of 2018 the Department hired a statistical analyst to manage and analyze data generated by several programs associated with the DOJ Settlement Agreement. Analysis of the LATD began in July of 2018 and continues to date. “Lima Reports” which detail the provision of language services to 911 callers in each Precinct inform local commanders how their Precinct is performing compared to the rest of the Department and also provide granular information on individual officer performance. These reports, instituted in 2018, will be issued quarterly beginning in 2020 and will now require a detailed response from each commander regarding remedial actions taken.

Information gleaned from the LATD also provides the LAC with a macro perspective on the relative usage of language services. As the Department began to implement the LAP in 2015 a marked increase in the use of uncertified Department personnel occurred along with an increased reliance on civilian bystanders. This was attributable to the procedural expansion of the types of circumstances which required the use of an interpreter in the field, coupled with a delay in finalizing a certification provider. After Language Line Solutions began certifying personnel, the use of non-certified personnel

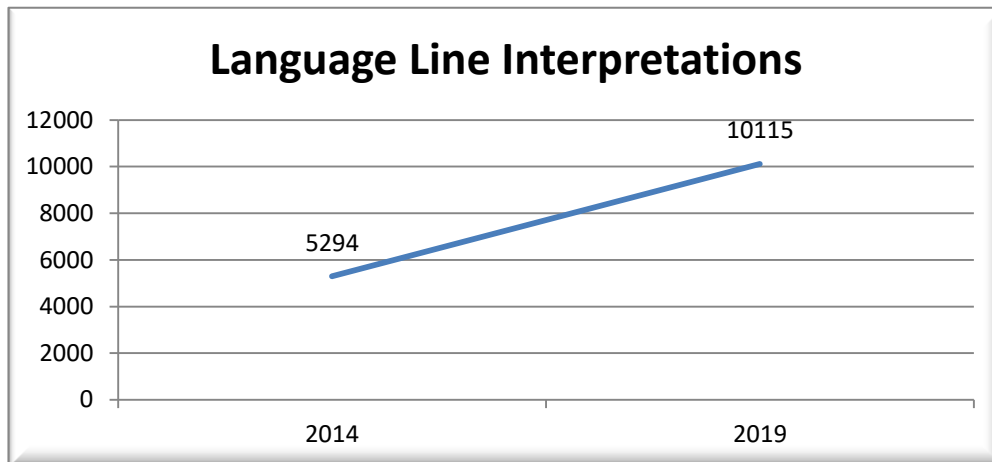
⁵ All in Spanish

⁶ 140 Spanish, 4 Polish, 1 Portuguese, 1 Italian, 2 Mandarin, 1 Turkish, 1 Hindi and 1 Russian

decreased drastically. By the end of 2018 a complete inversion occurred and the number of certified interpretations has maintained a steady upwards trend.⁷



This remarkable trend has been accompanied by a steady increase in the use of Language Line telephonic interpretation services over the same time period.

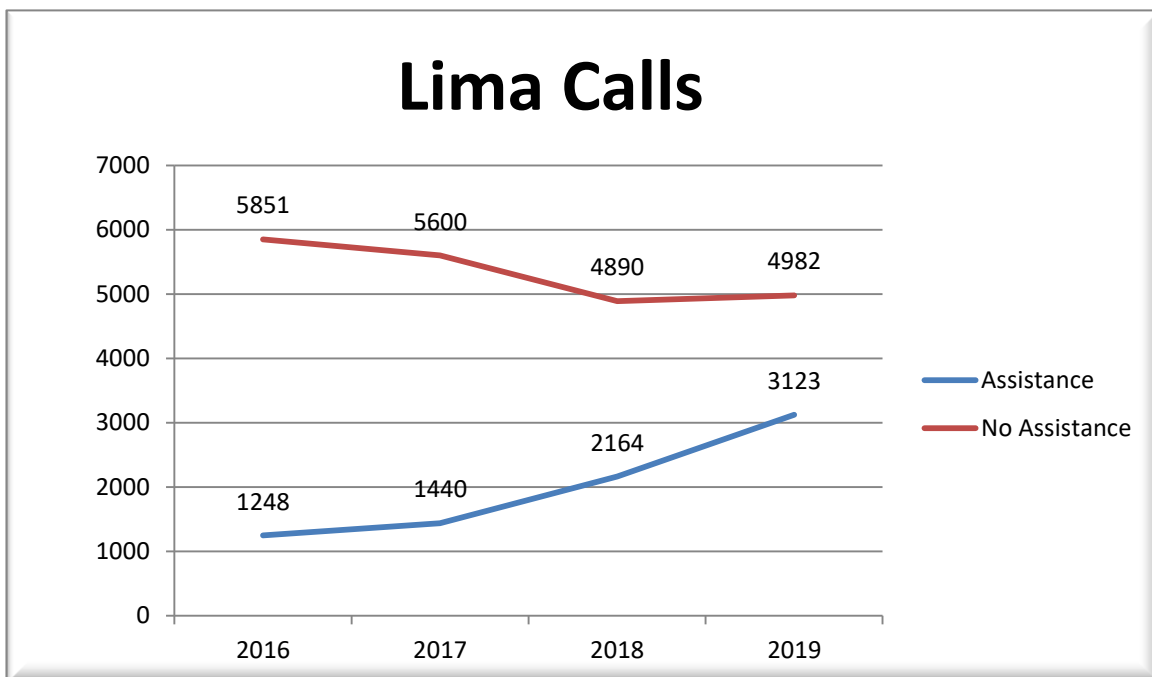


⁷ The 2018 Language Assistance Report incorrectly reported the number of Certified SCPD interpretations for 2018 as 215. This figure only covered interpretations performed by DAI's and did not include the 1770 interpretations performed by Bilingual Officers in 2018.

Monitoring the Delivery of Services

Interpretation protocols were first clearly established in policy during the 2015 calendar year after lengthy consultation with subject matter experts. Implementing those protocols required a culture change within the Department. First-line officers, routinely confronted with rapidly developing situations, had grown accustomed to using the most expedient means available to communicate with LEP individuals. Gaining compliance with the sometimes burdensome new protocols was, and continues to be, a lengthy process.

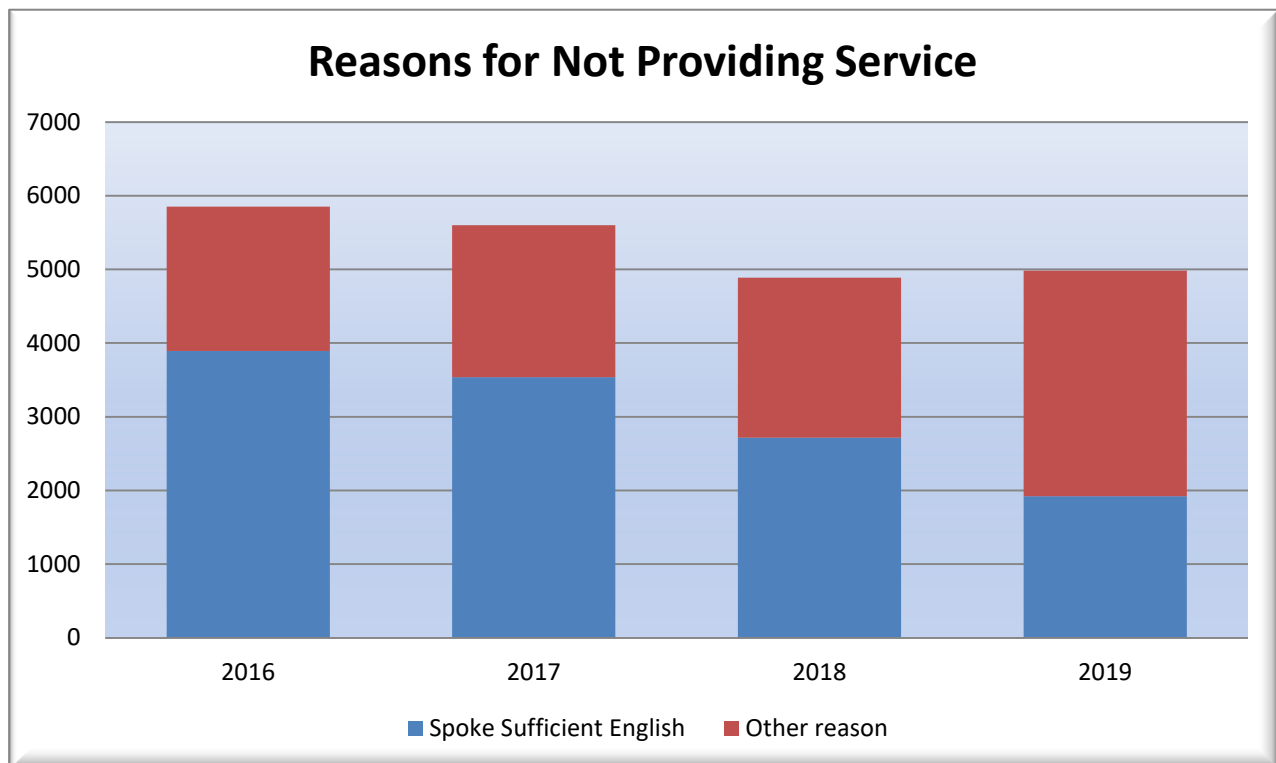
As described above, the use of Language Line and certified interpreters was the first critical step toward compliance with the newly adopted protocols. Equally important was the identification of circumstances that required those assets. Once the reporting infrastructure was built, the Department began to audit computer records to gain insight into compliance. One of the critical metrics entails reconciling the number of calls identified as needing language assistance (Lima calls), and the number of those calls receiving service.



Officers not rendering language services must choose from a handful of forced-choice dispositions when closing out a Lima call. Of those choices, "Complainant Spoke Sufficient English" is by far the most often cited reason for not providing services. This

reason is borne out in the facts of many cases, such as when the person calling 911 differs from the actual complainant, or when a situation deescalates and a complainant is able to communicate more clearly with an officer in person rather than a call-taker over the phone. The “Sufficient English” response can, however, also indicate that the responding officer accepted a substandard level of English proficiency because they believed the complainant could understand them.

To shed light on these circumstances the Department created an internal report comparing dispositions of Lima calls across Precincts. The reports also identify officers with the largest percentage of Lima calls closed as “Complainant Spoke Sufficient English”, along with corresponding case numbers. These “Lima Reports” first issued in September of 2018 allow commanding officers the ability to identify and follow up on individual officer activity while gaining perspective on how their command compares to others throughout the Department.⁸ A noticeable decline in the use of “Sufficient English” has occurred since institution of the Lima Reports.

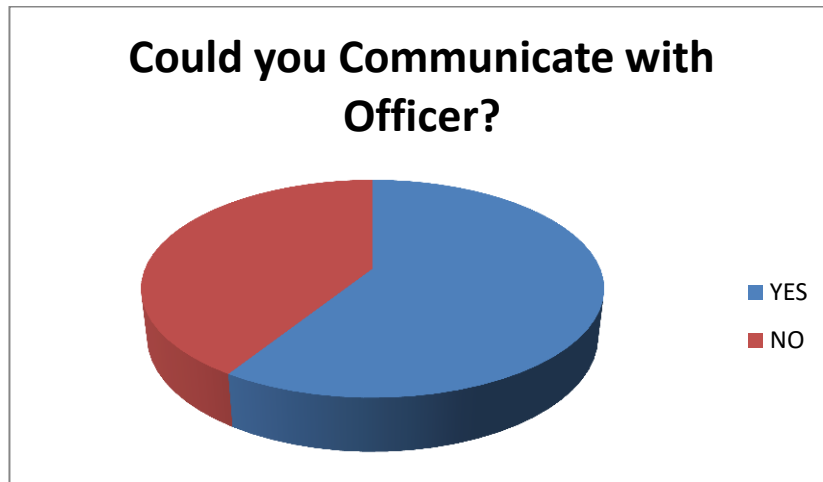


⁸ A sample report is attached as Appendix A with officer and civilian names and case numbers redacted to preserve confidentiality.

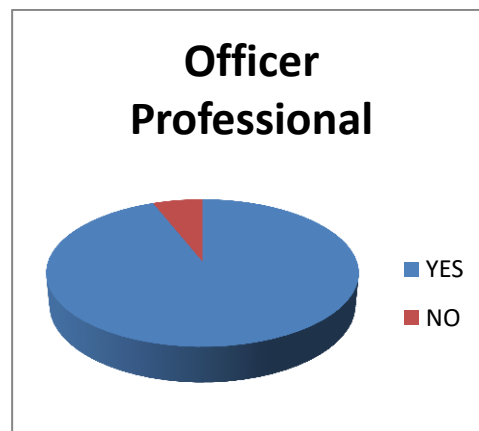
Beginning in 2020 Lima Reports will be issued quarterly, and a detailed response from the Precinct Commander to the Chief of Patrol will be required in order to enhance oversight.

In addition to statistical analysis, the Department also canvasses the individuals who place Lima calls. These “Quality of Service Audits” are conducted by Spanish-speaking Internal Affairs investigators, who ask LEP 911 callers a series of questions regarding the service they received from the officer who responded. In 2019 IAB investigators spoke with 117 LEP callers, representing approximately 1.5% of all Lima calls for the year.

The majority of those asked indicated that they could communicate with the officer who responded to their 911 call. Significantly, about 48% stated that they could not.



Of those who could not communicate, only about 15% said they received language assistance from the officer. The remainder, 40 individuals, or about 35% of all surveyed, stated they utilized some other person at the scene. Significantly, 106 out of the 117 people surveyed stated that they were satisfied with the overall service that the officer rendered, and 110 characterized the officer as professional.



2020 Language Assistance Goals

The Department will continue to improve compliance statistics through the 2020 calendar year, relying on its new oversight procedures and updated training modules. New insights from the community survey are anticipated and will provide a much deeper basis for analysis of current programs and procedures. Finally, increasing the number of bilingual personnel and language access infrastructure will remain a top priority.

APPENDIX A

3rd Precinct Report

Department Overview - Year End

Synopsis

Comparison of the number of “L calls” vs. the number of calls in which interpretation was provided. Compares the current year to the previous year.

Tables

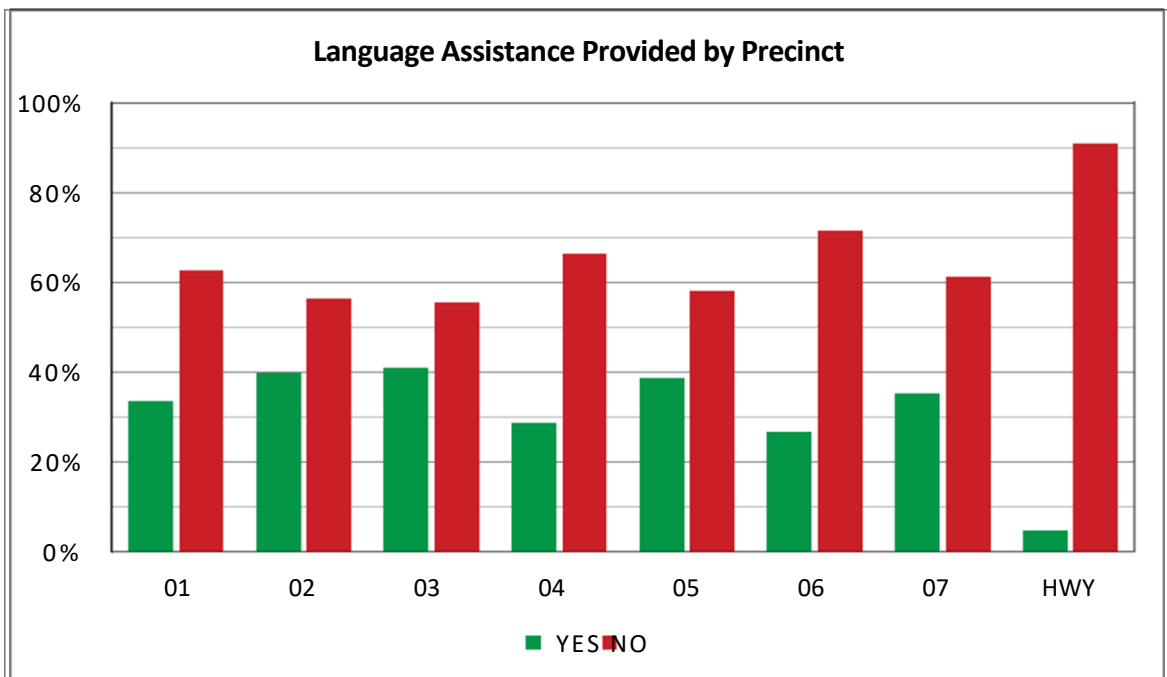
Counts & Percentages – Language Assistance provision for L calls. Includes a YTD average and comparison to previous year.

Precinct	% L Call Volume		Language Assistance – 2019 Year-End Totals						Comparison to Previous Year		
	Calls	% Vol	YES	%	NO	%	**NA	%	YES	NO	**NA
01	1446	17.2%	483	33.4%	907	62.7%	56	3.9%	+9.0%	-9.0%	+0.1%
02	899	10.7%	358	39.8%	507	56.4%	34	3.8%	+10.0%	-9.0%	-1.0%
03	3894	46.3%	1593	40.9%	2159	55.4%	142	3.6%	+6.6%	-8.0%	+1.4%
04	327	3.9%	94	28.7%	217	66.4%	16	4.9%	+12.8%	-9.4%	-3.4%
05	645	7.7%	249	38.6%	375	58.1%	21	3.3%	+11.7%	-12.5%	+0.8%
06	707	8.4%	188	26.6%	506	71.6%	13	1.8%	+1.4%	+1.3%	-2.7%
07	443	5.3%	156	35.2%	271	61.2%	16	3.6%	+6.3%	-5.5%	-0.8%
HWY	44	0.5%	2	4.5%	40	90.9%	2	4.5%	+2.5%	+2.9%	-5.5%
SCPD	8405	100.0%	3123	37.2%	4982	59.3%	300	3.6%	+7.5%	-7.7%	+0.2%

** NA: data not available or incomplete

Figures

Comparison of assistance rates by Precinct.



Department Overview – Three Month Comparison

Synopsis

Comparison of the number of “L calls” vs. the number of calls in which interpretation was provided. Compares the past three months to the same period in the previous year.

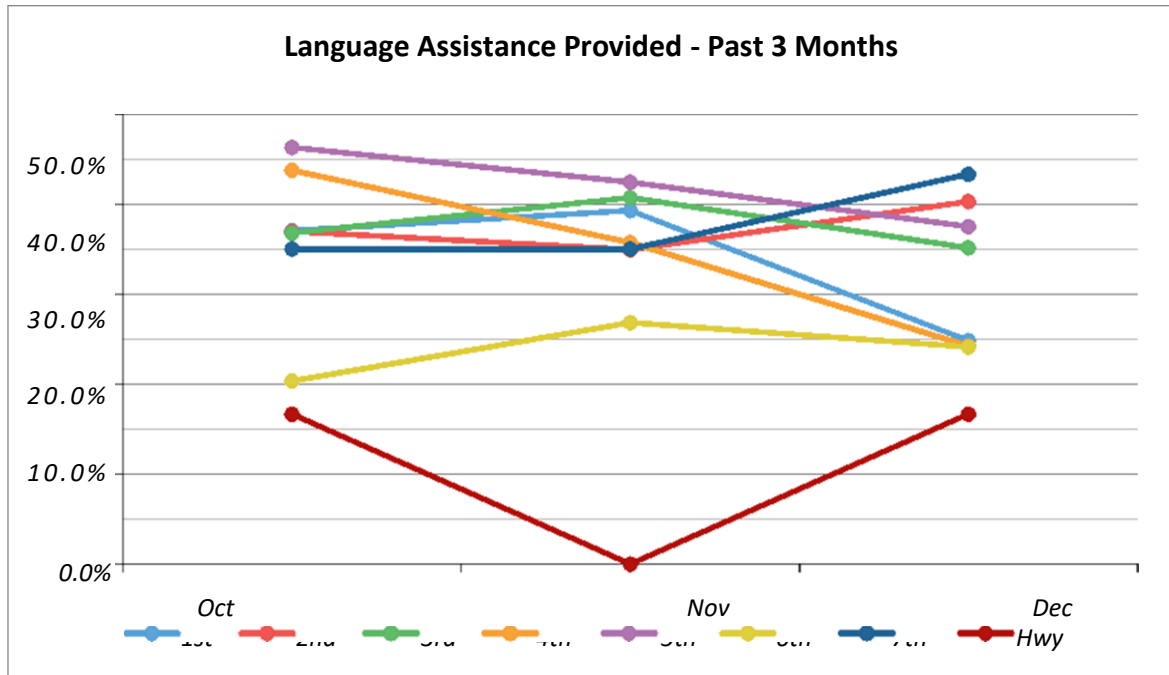
Tables

Counts & Percentages – Language Assistance provision for L calls over the past 3-month period this year (CY). Includes a 3-month average and a comparison to the average of the same period of the previous year (PY).

Precinct	% L Call Volume		Language Assistance Provided – 3 Month Period					
	Calls	% Vol	Oct	Nov	Dec	CY Avg	PY Avg	Change
01	365	17.2%	37.0%	39.3%	24.8%	32.9%	26.9%	+6.0%
02	228	10.8%	37.0%	34.9%	40.3%	37.3%	33.0%	+4.3%
03	967	45.7%	36.8%	40.7%	35.1%	37.6%	39.2%	-1.5%
04	93	4.4%	43.8%	35.7%	24.2%	34.4%	19.5%	+14.9%
05	176	8.3%	46.3%	42.4%	37.5%	42.0%	32.4%	+9.7%
06	158	7.5%	20.3%	26.8%	24.1%	23.4%	28.0%	-4.5%
07	110	5.2%	35.0%	35.0%	43.3%	37.3%	33.3%	+3.9%
HWY	21	1.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	9.5%	10.0%	-0.5%
SCPD	2118	100.0%	36.3%	38.2%	32.5%	35.6%	33.4%	+2.3%

Figures

Comparisons of Language Assistance Provided by Precinct over the past 3-month period. Values are the incidence of “Yes”.



Lima Reports – CAD “L” Calls
Monthly Precinct Reporting
 Office of the Commissioner – Legal
 2019 December & Year End Report – 3rd Precinct

3rd PCT - No Assistance Provided

Synopsis

L calls which did not receive language assistance services, broken down by category. Compares current month to a YTD total.

Tables

Counts & Percentages – “Reason No Assistance” was provided during L calls. Includes Current Month and YTD stats.

Category	SCPD		3PCT		YTD SCPD		YTD 3PCT	
	Calls	%	Calls	%	Calls	%	Calls	%
Complainant spoke sufficient English	177	42.2%	62	36.0%	1922	38.6%	702	32.5%
Caller was gone/missing from scene	28	6.7%	17	9.9%	593	11.9%	306	14.2%
Caller wishes to remain anonymous	47	11.2%	23	13.4%	630	12.6%	325	15.1%
Caller was not involved in incident	41	9.8%	15	8.7%	412	8.3%	194	9.0%
Aided case (10-8 or 10-9)	80	19.1%	42	24.4%	856	17.2%	464	21.5%
Other - Subcategories								
Complainant assisted by Department	13	3.1%	3	1.7%	135	2.7%	29	1.3%
Complainant assisted by 3rd Party	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	49	1.0%	23	1.1%
Call miscategorized as Lima	17	4.1%	6	3.5%	228	4.6%	55	2.5%
Caller refused assistance	3	0.7%	0	0.0%	43	0.9%	12	0.6%
Miscellaneous	12	2.9%	4	2.3%	114	2.3%	49	2.3%
Total	419	100.0%	172	100.0%	4982	100.0%	2159	100.0%

Figures

Comparison between Precinct and Department for reasons no assistance was provided.

