



## Administrative Policy No. 18.82

**Subject:** **Bilingual/Multilingual Employees – Assignment Pay, Certification, and Responsibilities**

**Information Contact:** Human Resources Division

**Authorizing Source:** WAC [388-03](#)  
Administrative Policy [7.20](#)  
Administrative Policy [18.28](#)  
Administrative Policy [7.21](#)  
RCW [74.04.025](#)  
[Bilingual Employee Test/Assessment Information and Scheduling Guidelines](#)  
[Language Testing and Certification Program](#)

**Effective Date:** May 1, 2013 <sup>1</sup> Housekeeping 5/15/13 <sup>2</sup> Housekeeping 9/4/14 <sup>03</sup> Housekeeping 2/26/24

**Approved By:** original signed by Glen G. Christopherson  
Senior Director, Human Resources Division

### Purpose

This policy describes the eligibility, role, testing requirements, and additional pay criteria for employees using bilingual skills as a work requirement. Employees meeting this policy's requirements are eligible to receive assignment pay.

### Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS staff.

### Definitions

**Assignment Pay:** The premium added to an employee's base salary to recognize specialized skills, assigned duties, and/or unique circumstances that exceed those normally assigned or experienced.

**Bilingual Employee:** An employee who has passed the required DSHS Bilingual Skills Test(s)/Assessment or sign language evaluation and is authorized to provide direct services to limited English proficient (LEP), deaf, and/or deaf-blind clients and employees.

**Client:** A person who applies for, or receives, services from DSHS.

**Foreign Language:** Any language other than English and sign language (e.g. Spanish, Russian, etc.).

**Interpretation:** The transfer of oral or manual communication from one language to another.

**Interpreter:** Any individual who interprets for other people conversing in different languages.

**Language Testing and Certification Program (LTC):** Within the Operations Support Services Division, the Office of Administrative Resources is the unit responsible for administering testing in foreign languages for DSHS employees, contracted interpreters, and translators.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP):** A limited ability to speak, read, write, and/or understand English.

**Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH):** The DSHS organization authorized to provide services including sign language interpreter services. ODHH conducts skill assessment to determine an employee's American Sign Language (ASL) proficiency.

**Sign Language:** The visual language of the Deaf community in the United States. American Sign Language (ASL) requires the use of facial expressions, hand shapes, body language, and gestures. ASL includes its own syntax and grammar structure that is different from English and any other spoken or foreign language. Other visual communication modes are based on the English language, including Pidgin Signed English (PSE), Signed Exact English (SEE), etc., and are not to be confused with ASL.

**Third-party Capacity:** Providing interpretation or translation services for another DSHS employee in order for that employee to accomplish his/her job duties. Interpretation or translation services provided must be related to DSHS business.

**Translation:** Transferring written communication from one language to another.

**Translator:** An individual providing translation for people who read and write different languages.

## **Policy Requirements**

### **A. Assignment Pay Criteria for Dual Language Skills Positions**

1. To be considered for dual language skills assignment pay, the position must be in Washington General Service.
2. The appointing authority or designee must determine the need for an employee with bilingual language skills in a specific non-English language. Factors to be considered include:
  - a. Language demographics of the service delivery area.
  - b. Frequency an employee uses his or her dual language skills.
  - c. Infrequent use of dual language skills may not qualify for assignment pay.
  - d. Costs of contracted services to meet specific non-English language needs.

- e. Obligation to use culturally appropriate service delivery mode through qualified staff to increase the quality of service.
3. Bilingual employees who are full-time will be paid a monthly rate for assignment pay. Employees working part-time will be paid on an hourly basis for assignment pay.
4. Job bulletins for vacant positions requiring dual language skills must indicate dual language proficiency requirements and must specify how and to what extent the dual language skills will be used on the job.
5. The Position Description Form (PDF) must specify how and to what extent the dual language skills will be used on the job.
6. Candidates applying for positions requiring dual language skills must pass the appropriate dual language test or assessment *prior* to being appointed.
7. The need for ongoing assignment pay is re-assessed at least every two years based on A.2 above. This review will consist of whether the PDF still requires the duties that justified the assignment pay. DSHS HRD Classification and Compensation will request a current PDF for this review.
8. Approved assignment pay for dual language skills will be removed if the skills, duties, or circumstances it is based on change.
9. Assignment pay for use of dual language skills is not to be used as compensation for additional workload.

**B. Testing Requirements for Dual Language Skills**

1. Prior to using dual language skills on the job, employees must demonstrate their ability to use these skills based on the following assessment:
  - a. **Foreign language skills**
    - i. Current and potential employees must pass the required language skills test(s) offered through LTC, as outlined in the [Bilingual Position Clusters and Test Requirements](#).
    - ii. Bilingual employees who move from one job classification to another must meet the certification requirements for the job classification they are moving into. After the employee has taken and passed the appropriate test, he/she is authorized to use their dual language skills in the new position. Example: A certified bilingual Financial Services Specialist takes a new position as a Social Service Specialist and must pass a new assessment to use their dual language skills as a Social Worker.
    - iii. Pre-test study materials for test candidates are available on-line at the LTC website <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/FS/OSS/LTC/Pages/PreTest.aspx>.

- iv. LTC can provide, upon written request, a critique in broad areas of test performance to candidates who do not pass the required test(s).
    - b. ***Sign language skills:*** Current/potential employees must pass a sign language proficiency assessment offered through ODHHS.
2. Tests and assessments are administered free of charge.
3. If a current or potential employee fails the test or assessment, the appointing authority may determine he or she wants the candidate to test again. The candidate may retest on the next available day and time.
4. An employee who does not pass the required language skills test(s) or assessment must not:
  - a. Receive assignment pay.
  - b. Use non-English language skills on the job with clients as part of their regular work assignments.
5. Additional information about bilingual employee test/assessment procedures is available at:  
[http://hrd.dshs.wa.gov/Top\\_Toolbar/Guidelines\\_and\\_Best\\_Practices/documents/Bilingual%20Employee%20Test%20Scheduling%20Guidelines.docx](http://hrd.dshs.wa.gov/Top_Toolbar/Guidelines_and_Best_Practices/documents/Bilingual%20Employee%20Test%20Scheduling%20Guidelines.docx)

### **C. Role of Bilingual Employees**

1. Bilingual employees work directly with and assist clients and/or other employees as required in the PDF.
2. Bilingual employees may periodically be used in a third-party capacity, as interpreters or translators in non-client related situations, or in brief, emergent client-related situations.
3. Normally, bilingual employees should not interpret or translate in a third-party capacity on a regular basis.
4. An appointing authority assigning an employee to provide interpretation and/or translations services in a third-party capacity for another DSHS employee working with a DSHS client on department business must ensure that: :
  - a. The employee is tested and certified or authorized at the appropriate level for the type and scope being performed. The administration's LEP Advisor will provide assistance determining appropriate employee testing.
  - b. The employee's workload is adjusted accordingly.
  - c. The employee's interpreter/translator responsibilities are clearly outlined in the PDF.
  - d. The employee's translation responsibilities are limited to "client specific" documents only. Translation of official DSHS documents must be processed through the administration's Translation Service Coordinator.

- e. If providing sign language interpreting, the employee must be registered and approved by ODHHS as a sign language interpreter.

<sup>1</sup> Changed Social Worker to Social Services Specialist in Section B.1.A.ii

<sup>2</sup> Updated hyperlinks

<sup>03</sup>Link updates 2024 SharePoint move.

DSHS Official