

Parents Entitled to Translation and Interpretation Services from School District of Philadelphia

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PHILADELPHIA — A pair of legal advocacy groups would like parents with limited English proficiency (LEP) to know that they have a right to translation and interpretation services in the School District of Philadelphia.

Federal law grants special legal rights to parents for whom English is not their first language. But the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (PILCOP) and the Education Law Center are trying to ensure compliance with a 2010 settlement agreement that provides additional protections to LEP families in the School District of Philadelphia.

That case — *Y.S. v. School District of Philadelphia* — requires that parents in Philadelphia receive appropriate translation and interpretation services to participate effectively in important educational decisions and school events for their children.

The District must give annual notice to LEP families of the translation and interpretation services available. The District also must make "maximum possible efforts" to employ bilingual personnel and conduct regular trainings to educate all employees on the necessary skills to serve English Language Learners and their families.

“The School District of Philadelphia has failed to make the necessary provisions for LEP families under the guidelines of the law,” said Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia Attorney Sonja Kerr.

Under the court-approved settlement agreement in the *Y.S.* case, schools must translate written documents and provide interpreters for school meetings. Schools cannot require families to provide their own interpreter or use their child in that role. These rules apply even if the family is the only non-English-speaking family in the school.

Additional examples of services that schools must deliver, according to the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and the Education Law Center, are:

- Interpreters at Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings for students receiving special education services;
- Translated special education documents, including IEPs and 504 plans;
- Interpreters at parent-teacher conferences;
- Translated student report cards and test results ;
- Translated enrollment forms and interpretation services at enrollment events;
- Translated disciplinary notices; and,
- Interpreters at expulsion hearings, truancy proceedings and due process hearings under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”).

For assistance with language access issues in the School District of Philadelphia, please contact Eliza Presson (epresson@elc-pa.org) at the Education Law Center, or Sonja Kerr (skerr@pilcop.org) at the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia.

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