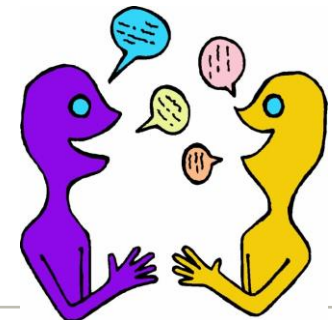


Watch Your Language!

Language Rights and their Impact



Why do Language Rights Matter?

- U.S. becoming a “minority majority” country.
- Allow meaningful access to services
- Level ability to help in decision making (medical care, IEP)
- Without them a person may unknowingly waive rights (to appeal, criminal matters)
- Create potential for dangerous misunderstanding (DCF, emergency care)

The Legal “Argle Bargle”

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance;
- Court cases in 1970’s establish that language is a proxy for national origin;
- In 2000 Bill Clinton signs Executive Order that mandates language access in all federally funded programs.



What Does This All Mean?

An Individual with a limited ability to read, write, speak, and understand English has the right to:

- Use **public** programs and **communicate in the preferred language**, including setting a language preference to receive vital written materials.
- **Right to an interpreter** that is free, qualified, trained in subject, impartial, and ensures person understands what everyone says.

Even if the person has some command or knowledge of the language, if they understand better their own language, they can ask for it!

The Impact

- Example: Problems in Lawrence Public Schools
- Enrollment 91.3% are Latino; 70% speak English as second language.
- Group of parents complained failure to provide interpreters at meetings translated documents.
- Provision of trained and qualified interpreters and translators with knowledge of concepts- 46!
- IEP and other notices provided in native language **and without delay.**

Discussion



"I say to hell with it. If it can't be said in English, it ain't worth saying at all."