

# Wayfinding and Signage Strategies for Language Access in the California Courts

## *Report and Recommendations*



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## Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts (Language Access Plan or LAP) establishes a comprehensive multi-faceted approach to address quality and effective language access services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) users at all points of contact with the court. As singled out in Goal 4 of the LAP, strong wayfinding systems and easy-to-understand multilingual signage are both critical to ensuring LEP court users can navigate the courthouse and locate and receive appropriate services. To implement this goal, the LAP's recommendations ask the Judicial Council to provide sample signage and translations for courts, guidance on the use of internationally recognized symbols and icons, and wayfinding and signage strategies that focus on serving LEP users and can be incorporated in new courthouse construction and redesign efforts.

A wayfinding system encompasses all of the elements that assist people with orienting themselves in a physical location and navigating to their desired destination. Architecture, landmarks, lighting, landscape, and other visual features come together to provide cues in order for people to find their way in complex or unfamiliar environments. In a courthouse building, effective wayfinding techniques help court users by quickly informing them of their surroundings in a new and often intimidating or stressful space, and facilitating their ability to locate and access court services and functions. While signage is essential to a strong wayfinding system, a well-designed wayfinding strategy can reduce the need for signs and extensive written direction and information. Creating more intuitive, easy-to-navigate spaces helps all court visitors and is particularly effective in rendering a space more accessible to LEP court users as well as other groups, such as persons with cognitive disabilities and those with low literacy.

Signage complements a building's wayfinding systems to make sure users can find their destination. It can include static printed materials or signs, as well as dynamic or electronic signage, which allow courts to more easily update information for court users. A comprehensive signage strategy includes having appropriate easy-to-understand signs located at primary points of contact and at key decision points in the courthouse. In addition, signage must be translated and/or employ universally recognized symbols to help LEP court users navigate the courthouse and access the services they need.

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) was contracted to assist the Judicial Council with implementation of the Language Access Plan's Goal 4 and its recommendations. To that end, the NCSC conducted telephone interviews along with in-person site visits to identify current wayfinding practices used by California courts. Research was also carried out to identify best practices for providing court signage in all appropriate languages. The report that follows

includes the NCSC's research and review of the principles of universal design in the context of language access, and provides recommendations on signage, navigability, and wayfinding strategies for accessible courthouses that supplement the existing California Trial Courts Facility Standards<sup>1</sup> to improve access for LEP court users.

### **Overview of Current Wayfinding Systems:**

- Overall, the courts interviewed and visited vary with regard to existing wayfinding and signage strategies in place. Newer courthouses generally have stronger strategies incorporated into their design, while older courthouses are challenged with respect to limitations of architecture, planning, space, etc.
- Of the courts visited, all generally had a good floor layout to assist users with navigating the space. Building directories and maps were generally present, though not used consistently throughout the state, and those discussed or observed were only in English.
- Opportunities for implementing stronger wayfinding strategies were identified, such as involving staff early on in the planning, making signage more functional, and making signage flexible to accommodate the changing needs of the courthouses.
- Limitations identified included facility structure, lack of available space, apprehension about translating signage in-house, and the costs related to the translation of signage.
- Multilingual signage, when available, is primarily limited to Spanish, though a number of the participating courts use the [multilingual court closure signs](#) (in English and four additional languages) developed and provided by the Judicial Council.
- The [Notice of Available Language Access Services](#) (Notice), available in English and nine additional languages, is currently being used on a very limited basis, and several courts (including those using the Notice) expressed a desire for it to be more customizable.
- There is very little use of iconography (icons/symbols) in the courts.
- There appears to be more signage at courthouses with a higher volume of self-represented litigants, and in these courts (and in self-help center offices and spaces), signage was more often translated.

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<sup>1</sup> See the introduction, p. 11 of the full report, for a description of the California Trial Courts Facility Standard.

- Staff and administrators at some of the courts interviewed and visited expressed concerns about providing too much signage and overwhelming users with too much text (particularly when including translations), and about the accessibility of signage for users with low literacy.
- Electronic signage is used by some, particularly newer, courts and an electronic queuing system is also employed by several courts.
- Other tools for language access include staffed reception desks to immediately assist users prior to (or immediately after) entering secured areas, use of bilingual staff, telephonic interpretation services, videos in Spanish, I Speak cards, and video remote interpreting (VRI), though usage varies across courts.

### **Considerations for Further Development:**

As the Judicial Council of California develops and implements its wayfinding strategies, some key considerations should be kept in mind:

#### General Wayfinding Considerations:

- To reduce the need for signage, effective wayfinding systems should be used to intuitively guide users as they move throughout a space, necessitating fewer directions or explanations at key decision points.
- For courts that are expanding into new or existing facilities, and as required for all court construction projects under the Facility Standards, court staff and administrators should engage with the designers and architects early in the process of design and signage strategy development to ensure that the standards used meet the needs of court users and of individual courts.
- Simply arranged floor layouts should be created to assist users in orientating themselves inside the building.
- As specified in the Facility Standards, high volume functions (e.g., clerk's office, information desk) should be located close to the main entrance.
- The flow of traffic in public areas should be simplified in terms of direction and complexity (e.g., directional choice points, alternate corridors, too many doors).

- Space should be provided within the lobby for persons to orient themselves before entering through screening, and visual access to the outdoors in public spaces should also be provided to serve as an orientation guide inside the courthouse.
- Direct sight lines to important functions in public corridors should be provided so court users can easily navigate the space, orient themselves, and locate important locations.
- Well-marked visual features or landmarks should be provided near decision points within the courthouse (e.g., windows, doors, skylights, public art, color, texture, and scale).

General Signage Considerations:

- Signage should be used to complement a building's wayfinding and navigation system so users can locate their destination.
- A coordinated approach to signage should be used throughout the building, including floors, departments, or functions.
- Signage at the exterior of a building should be used to provide information and direction to court users regarding entry, exit, security screening, building activities and services and hours of operation. As required by building codes, exterior signage must also include clearly marked access paths and services for persons with disabilities.
- Interior signage should be used to provide directional assistance, information for users to identify offices and services, and regulatory signage addressing evacuation methods, smoking restrictions, etc.
- Signage should be used carefully to ensure the right balance between reliance on architectural features that facilitate wayfinding and complementary signage that does not overburden a space and cause confusion for court users.
- Signs should be placed in locations where major decisions must be made, and specific information should be provided on them.
- Signs should be placed perpendicular to destination entrances (preferable for visibility) or parallel to destination entrances. Signs should be spaced so that successive signs are visible.
- Signs should be located in repetitive locations on multiple floors.

- International symbols should be used for common spaces or functions in lieu of words wherever possible.
- Signs should be uniform in terms of color, font style, and scale. Sans serif or other legible boldface font types should be used.<sup>2</sup>
- Where feasible, scannable codes, such as Quick Response (QR) codes, should be incorporated into the signage program in order to supplement building and service information using mobile technology.

#### Signage Flexibility:

- Due to the changes in occupancy and use of court facilities over time, signage systems should be designed with flexibility in mind. Examples include:
  - Installing signs that allow users to modify information;
  - Replacing static signs with magnetic boards where notices can be posted and changed out;
  - Providing space on static signs where notices and other information can be affixed; and
  - Utilizing electronic signage where appropriate.

#### Multilingual Signage:

- The Facility Standards should be updated to reflect language access considerations, practices, and recommendations, including suggestions pertaining to multilingual signage.
- When deciding what types of signage to post, courts should first take an inventory of existing signs and group signage by concept so that words used are consistent. Signage throughout a court building (or buildings) should use the same phrasing to avoid confusing the public as well as for efficiency and cost-effective reasons; having one adopted phrase means just one translation into each language is necessary.
- Signage that is specifically required by building life safety codes, such as emergency exit signs, should be designed in accordance with such codes. The signs most appropriate for

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<sup>2</sup> While sans serif fonts meet those criteria for English, they may not be appropriate for other languages. Translation vendors should recommend fonts for various languages to ensure readability in the target language.



translation for language access purposes are those addressing court functions and operations.

- In determining into how many languages a sign should be translated, the courts should be proactive in gathering data on community demographics and implement signage strategies that are consistent with the needs of the community. (Pursuant to the LAP, signage should be in English and up to five other languages, as appropriate given sign content, placement, criticality, and a court's community's demographics.)
- All multilingual signage developed must be clear, concise, accurate, culturally appropriate, and in plain language. Signage should be standardized within a court and across courts, when appropriate, to minimize confusion.
- The use of symbols or icons should be incorporated into signage wherever possible to support written messages. Universally recognized symbols should be identified or developed together with the Judicial Council.
- The Judicial Council could continue to encourage courts to use its master contract with a translation agency for signage and other local translations, and ensure communication of the availability of this master contract to all relevant court administrators and Language Access Representatives. Using this master contract minimizes the need for individual courts to look for translation agencies, issue requests for proposals, or have to manage local contracts.
- In fiscal year 2016–2017, the NCSC will provide the Judicial Council with plain language multilingual sample signage content in English and at least eight additional languages for identified common signs routinely needed in courts across the state in a format that is customizable to fit local needs. The NCSC will also provide the Judicial Council with a signage and phraseology glossary for common signs to encourage the use of standardized signage content statewide. The Judicial Council should make all sample signage, translations, and signage glossaries available to courts via the [Language Access Toolkit](#).
- In the future, the Judicial Council should, if possible, further contract for and fund translations of additional signage into the state's top eight to ten languages.

#### Electronic Signage:

- The Judicial Council and individual courts should broaden the use of electronic signs, which are well-suited for information that changes often and other important content that lends itself to dynamic visual representation, such as short and brief messages that provide resources or information to court users. Messages can also be rotated in several

languages, and play videos demonstrating a particular process (such as security clearance).

- The Judicial Council and individual courts should explore expanding the use of electronic docket signs to include short, translatable text such as how to request an interpreter, location and services of the self-help center, and basic information to litigants on calendar such as checking in with the clerk or rules for courtroom conduct.
- Electronic queuing systems should allow for users to select the language in which they want to see the menu of services, and the numbers issued by the system should, whenever possible, connect a court user to a staff member who speaks the court user's primary language. The monitors should also provide multilingual information to court users while they wait for service.
- The Judicial Council should assist courts in developing performance requirements for electronic queuing systems and other electronic signage to allow for multilingual capabilities.
- Courts should continue to explore the use of electronic signage for applications traditionally handled by static signs and where signage needs to remain flexible and information needs to be updated regularly.
- In expanding electronic signage programs, courts should take into consideration any staff support needed for its electronic signage systems to ensure they have the capabilities for maintenance, update, and proper operation of the signage.

Notice of Availability of Language Access Services:

- More information should be obtained from Language Access Representatives as to how the Notice of Available Language Access Services could be made more usable for courts. Those changes should then be implemented and the new tools should be re-distributed, through direct communication as well as through the [Language Access Toolkit](#). The Notice should also allow for customization by local courts.

Measuring Effectiveness and Ongoing Implementation:

- The Judicial Council and courts should evaluate the effectiveness and desirability of particular signage strategies on an ongoing basis, through focus groups and feedback including, but not limited to, court staff, Language Access Representatives, self-help center providers, and court users themselves.

- The Judicial Council should consider the formation of a working group, under the auspices of the standing Translation Advisory Committee,<sup>3</sup> to develop specific recommendations for a signage plan, such as standardized international symbols or icons, recommendations for flexible signage, standards for electronic signage, and a living signage glossary with proposed signage phraseology in plain language and additional languages.
- The judicial branch may benefit from an ongoing look at how other industries, such as air travel and healthcare, as well as other government agencies and services continue to evolve and implement signage and wayfinding strategies to serve and improve access to their users. Learning from other models and from its own efforts will be critical for California courts as they implement and further strategies to make courthouses throughout the state more accessible to LEP users and all court visitors.

The California Language Access Plan firmly establishes that comprehensive language access requires the judicial branch to address access at all points of contact between LEP court users and the court system. Wayfinding and signage are critical components of an effective plan by facilitating access for court users to the court services and functions they require. Implementation of the LAP must therefore ensure that California courts incorporate effective wayfinding and signage systems wherein multilingual information and accessibility for LEP court users become standard practices in court buildings throughout the state.

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<sup>3</sup> See California Language Access Plan, Recommendation #36, providing for the creation of a translation committee.

## Introduction

The [Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts](#) sets forth a comprehensive statewide approach to providing language access to LEP users in the state courts at all points of contact with the court, and in all components of court services. In particular, Goal 4 of the LAP addresses best practices and resources for high quality translations and signage, specifically targeting strong wayfinding<sup>4</sup> systems and easy-to-understand multilingual signage as critical elements to ensure LEP court users can access the courthouse and its services. Recommendation #39 asks that Judicial Council staff assist local courts by providing plain language translations of the most common and relevant signs in a courthouse, as well as guidance on the use of symbols and icons where possible to limit the need for text. Under Recommendations #41 and #42, the LAP tasks the Judicial Council with providing courts with wayfinding and signage strategies that focus on serving LEP users; the goal is that these strategies and systems be incorporated in all new courthouse construction and redesign efforts in order to further the California judicial branch's commitment to improving language access throughout the state.

In response to these recommendations, the Judicial Council's contract with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) specifies, under Deliverable 3.1.6, that the NCSC is to provide a report on recommended guidelines and best practices regarding linguistically accessible courthouses. The deliverable also includes the provision of up to three sample signs and translations in plain English and eight additional languages customizable by courts to fit local needs, as well as assistance with a signage and phraseology glossary in English; sample signage and the glossary will be provided to the Judicial Council by June 30, 2017. This report addresses the first part of the deliverable.

In this report, the NCSC includes research and review of the principles of universal design in the context of language access and recommendations on signage, navigability, and wayfinding strategies for accessible courthouses. The first part of the report presents the findings on existing wayfinding and signage systems in California courts, a result of in-person site visits and extensive telephone interviews with identified court locations statewide. The report proceeds to discuss these findings in-depth, identifying best practices, challenges, research, and recommendations from other industries where signage and wayfinding play similarly significant roles. Finally, the report presents concrete recommendations for courts and the Judicial Council to continue to build upon the existing California Trial Courts Facility Standards<sup>5</sup> to augment wayfinding and signage strategies for improved access for LEP court users.

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<sup>4</sup> Wayfinding for the purpose of this report pertains to a system to inform people of their surroundings in (usually) an unfamiliar environment.

<sup>5</sup> In August 2011, the California Trial Courts Facility Standards—2011 edition were issued to all architects and engineers retained by the Judicial Council's Capital Program Office with instructions to use for all new court buildings. The 2011 Facility Standards are in effect for all trial court buildings, and must be used in conjunction with applicable

## Methodology

For this deliverable, the NCSC conducted in-person site visits at four court locations (in three counties) and ten telephone interviews with courts throughout the state. The court sites visited as well as those interviewed were identified in collaboration with Judicial Council staff and included courts of different sizes and located in various regions throughout the state. The in-person site visits included:

- Spinetta Family Law Center, Martinez, California (Contra Costa Superior Court)
  - Construction date: 2003
  - Approximate size: 37,500 square feet
  - Stories: 2 (Plus Basement)
  - Courtrooms: 5
  
- Richard E. Arnason Justice Center, Pittsburg, CA (Contra Costa Superior Court)
  - Construction date: 2010
  - Approximate size: 73,500 square feet
  - Stories: 2
  - Courtrooms: 7
  
- San Bernardino Justice Center, San Bernardino, CA (San Bernardino Superior Court)
  - Construction date: 2014
  - Approximate size: 383,750 square feet
  - Stories: 11
  - Courtrooms: 35
  
- Old Solano Courthouse, Fairfield, CA (Solano Superior Court)
  - Original Construction: 1911
  - Renovation: 2014
  - Approximate size: 30,000 square feet
  - Stories: 2
  - Courtrooms: 3

The 10 courts that participated in telephonic interviews with NCSC staff include the superior courts of the following counties: Calaveras, Fresno, Humboldt, Madera, Merced, Sacramento, San Benito, Santa Clara, Tulare, and Yolo.

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code and project requirements as the basis of design for new court facilities in California. The Facility Standards are available through the Capital Program Office.

NCSC staff conducting the in-person site visits included an architect and subject matter expert in building, design, and wayfinding strategies, and a federally certified court interpreter/national consultant on language access issues. NCSC staff met with court administrators, court facilities staff, and Language Access Representatives, and were given extensive tours of facilities and provided significant opportunity to ask questions and obtain feedback from court staff regarding successful strategies, lessons learned, thoughts on future strategies and needs, and information on how the Judicial Council can best support local courts in their signage and wayfinding needs.<sup>6</sup> The telephone interviews were conducted by two NCSC staff and questions focused on wayfinding and signage strategies used in the courts and/or specific challenges encountered when employing various strategies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for the checklist utilized by NCSC staff during the site visits.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for the document with telephone interview questions, shared with participants before the interviews.

## Findings on Existing Wayfinding and Signage Strategies in California Courts

Overall, the courts interviewed and visited have wayfinding and signage strategies in place to address accessibility by court users, including persons with limited English proficiency, though these strategies vary based on each individual court's needs, resources, facility design, structure, and other related issues. Court facilities throughout the state are extremely diverse with regard to size, age of construction, and design. Of the four locations (three counties) visited, three buildings were part of new or recent construction efforts (the Pittsburg Court opened in November 2010, San Bernardino opened in May 2014, and the Old Solano Courthouse—an old historic building that was redesigned—opened to the public in September 2014). The courts that participated by phone represented a combination of both newer buildings and older facilities. Throughout the interviews and visits, NCSC staff observed that courts with more recent construction follow the Facility Standards provided by the Judicial Council, while older facilities may not.

### Wayfinding Strategies and Navigability

- Courts vary with regard to whether or not they have a formal wayfinding or signage strategy in place. For newer courthouses designed under the Judicial Council-approved Facility Standards, architects and designers do appear to have deliberately considered wayfinding and signage in design, and the features implemented greatly facilitate effective navigation of the courthouse. However, while the Facility Standards acknowledge the importance of signage, there do not seem to be specific policies with regard to signs in multiple languages.
- Strong wayfinding design strategies can compensate for less overall use of signage. Specifically, the building design and intuitive layout can make it easier for court users to find services, although signage may still be needed for effective navigation of the court and for clear identification of court services.
- Overall, information gathered during interviews indicates that older buildings present more challenges with regard to wayfinding and intuitive use of space due to older architectural styles, design strategies that are not as customer-oriented, and limited space options. Adapting older spaces that were traditionally designed for, and used by, lawyers and other trained legal professionals and making them user-friendly for the public at large and for increasing numbers of self-represented litigants remains a challenge for many courts.

- In general, all the courthouses visited had an easily understood floor layout to assist users in developing a cognitive map of the space. Distinguishing features included:
  - The courthouses visited were all arranged so that high volume functions, such as information kiosks, clerk public service counters, and self-help areas were located close to the main entrance. This allows visitors to easily locate and access important court services without having to navigate across the courthouse.
  - The public traffic flow appeared to be intentionally simplified in the design of the courthouses visited. For example, the buildings were organized in a straightforward manner so traffic flow is limited to one or two major circulation corridors. In buildings with multiple floors, the major public corridors were stacked upon each other in a repetitive fashion. These simplified building organization strategies allow public visitors to better maintain their sense of direction while moving around inside the courthouse.
  - Sight lines in public corridors were not restricted.
- Building directory maps and directories were present in all the newer constructed courts visited while life safety egress diagrams were present in both the newer and older courthouses visited. The telephone interviews indicated that the presence of building directories and maps might not be consistent around the state. All building directories observed and maps viewed in person were in English.
- Court staff expressed the importance of being involved in the design of signage and the need to implement signage strategies that would be responsive to evolving building utilization and occupancy changes over time.
- Court staff reported that decisions made by designers and architects can sometimes place too much emphasis on aesthetics and not as much on usability and functionality. For example, in some cases, it appeared that signage was purposely designed to be subtle, as observed through the use of colors that blended with wall finishes and font sizes that were not legible at a distance. This may indicate an aesthetic decision, as opposed to a decision based in usability and functionality.
- Some court staff felt that designers and architects should consider greater signage flexibility in their courthouse designs as overall court uses, offices, departments, and services change over time. The evolving court system necessitates a flexible and user-responsive signage approach and the installation of custom-made signage should consider future signage flexibility where appropriate. As one example, one court moved a department to another building and changing the signage to reflect the move would cost over \$12,000. Due to the prohibitive cost, the old department name remains above the



door and paper signs are used around the entrance to provide the new department name. Another court has made additions to complement existing design and signage that was not sufficient; for example, they added signage in elevators indicating what services and offices were on each floor, and added monitors in front of courtroom doors indicating when the court is closed to the public.

- Limitations faced by courts when implementing signage include: facility structure, lack of lobby and/or wall space, limited power and data ports (for electronic signage), limited funds, ownership of building (if county owned or shared with county), and apprehension about accuracy of translated information if created by the court on its own.
- As referenced above, some court staff expressed that limitations for signage in existing buildings are due to cost (replacement signs that keep the building's design and scheme are too costly). As an alternative, many courts post paper signs throughout their courthouses to supplement the original building wayfinding/signage system. In other cases, court staff have decided that they do not want to clutter walls and environments with temporary paper signs, even in areas where signage and wayfinding tools are limited.

## Multilingual Signage

- At the visited and interviewed locations, multilingual signage, when available, is primarily limited to Spanish (typically the language other than English with the highest number of language services requests). In some cases, it appears that courts use staff to translate multilingual signage, such as one court visited by NCSC staff, which has a bilingual supervisor who translates signs and ensures all customer-oriented signs are translated and have an organized, clean, and uniform look throughout the building.
- The multilingual [Notice of Available Language Access Services](#) approved by the Judicial Council was only observed in use by one visited court and was only referenced as being used by a limited number of interviewed courts. As indicated in some interviews, courts may be reluctant to use the Notice as it currently exists because it may refer to language services that courts may not be able to provide. Specifically, one court noted the need to be able to customize the Notice so that it reflects the top languages locally. Another court reported a preference for in-person interactions with staff that would ensure access to language services, as opposed to using the Notice.
- A number of the participating courts use the [multilingual court closure signs](#) (in English and four additional languages) developed and provided by the Judicial Council. All visited

courts had the court closure signs posted since a court holiday (Columbus Day) was approaching.

- There is limited use of iconography (if used at all) in the courthouses visited and interviewed. Icons or symbols are primarily used for restrooms, no smoking signs, or to show prohibited items in the building.
- During site visits, NCSC staff noted that locations with a larger number of self-represented litigants included more signage and the signage was more likely to be translated. The signage in these locations seemed to be created out of necessity by staff to assist with the provision of information and to help with points of confusion.
- Some court staff interviewed reported challenges of knowing how much signage is sufficient, and were wary of providing too much signage or too many translations, which may cause court users to not see any signs at all, even more critical ones. In addition, the glass encasements affixed on the wall used by some courts to display paper signage may not have enough space to allow for multilingual signage.
- At least one court reported that the emphasis on signage to serve the public may not be the best strategy since many court users may have limited literacy and do not or cannot read signs or do not understand them. This court reported that appropriate staffing and addressing questions or concerns in person via court staff was preferable.

## Electronic Signage

- Electronic signage is used by some courts, particularly those constructed in more recent years. The experience with electronic signage appears positive, and signs at courthouses visited were tastefully integrated into the building design. (See pictures included below under “Site Visit Highlights: Wayfinding and Signage by Location.”) Specific findings with regard to electronic signage included the following:
  - Electronic signs are used for displaying a court’s calendar, either in lobby areas with calendars for the entire building, or outside of courtrooms, with dockets for that day. Where it is used for calendars, information is provided in English.
  - Electronic displays are also used as part of the electronic queuing system (see p. 35 for more information), to announce the number being called and/or provide information. In at least one courthouse, the screens displayed information in English and Spanish.

- At least one court reported using electronic signage to provide information on court closures, rules of conduct, and the security screening process, allowing flexibility in modifying the approved or prohibited items. Some of this information is provided in English and Spanish.
- At least two courts are exploring ways to maximize the space on the docket electronic signs, particularly space at the bottom (currently unused or used for static information) to provide interpreter-related notices in a number of languages. See Figure 73 for a sample of the change the Solano Superior Court will soon implement in its electronic signage. At least one other court is already using the e-signage in this way.
- Three of the courts visited use an electronic queue management system<sup>8</sup> for assisting customers at the clerk's office (and at the self-help center for one of the courts). It was also used in at least one of the courts interviewed by telephone at both self-help and clerk's office locations.
  - With one exception, the systems observed rely on customers using a freestanding kiosk to select the reason for their visit instead of standing in traditional lines.<sup>9</sup> Once a customer has checked in, he or she receives a number and is placed in an electronic queue. The customer is able to wait in a designated sitting area rather than stand in line. After check-in, display monitors and public announcement systems are used to provide information and to direct customers to their assigned public service window. The queuing system, with pictures demonstrating the screens, is discussed in more detail below.
  - Benefits include the ability to reduce the need for standing in line for long periods of time and better management tools for deployment of staffing resources. The combination of clearly visible kiosks, legible public announcement systems, and digital monitors work well to direct visitors to their desired destination.
  - The electronic kiosk screens used with the system provided bilingual (English and Spanish) information in one court, with announcements and other information offered while customers waited for their number. For another court, the actual queuing system used to get a number was bilingual, but the screens announcing

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<sup>8</sup> The Spinetta Family Law Center, the Richard E. Arnason Justice Center, and the San Bernardino Justice Center all use the Qmatic™ system.

<sup>9</sup> One of the visited courts rearranged the use of the Qmatic™ system so that users must first visit a reception desk, where a staff person uses the system him or herself to check in the user. That court decided to stop using the free-standing kiosks because, given the complexity of overlapping services at that particular location, court users were having difficulties accurately self-identifying their need and were checking in for the wrong service or for multiple services at the same time. Once checked in, the rest of the queuing system worked in the same manner as in other courts.

numbers were in English. One court monitors the queuing system and tries to match a Spanish speaker to bilingual staff so that the customer may be assisted in his or her primary language. When no Spanish-speaking staff is available, the court uses LanguageLine for assistance.

## Other Tools for Language Access

- Staffed information and reception desks that can directly assist court users seemed very useful. As observed in one court, the information desk could be accessed without having to go through security clearance, which helped court users immediately identify where they needed to go and helped to keep lines from additional unnecessary congestion.
- Other language access tools reported by courts included using bilingual staff at clerk windows, utilizing bilingual staff rosters, calling on staff interpreters, using telephone interpreting agencies, such as LanguageLine or Language Select, and providing arraignment videos in Spanish. While many courts were aware of the [Language Access Toolkit](#) developed and released by the Judicial Council staff in 2015, the tools included seemed to be primarily accessed by the Language Access Representatives in each court at this time, and some reported that the toolkit needs more resources before it would be considered a go-to tool for their court.
- Of the several courts that use bilingual staff at critical points of contact for language access, there was no mention of employing techniques for court users to be able to easily identify those staff members, such as wearing specific identification badges.
- One court provides computers (and headphones) for the public to view videos provided on its Virtual Self-Help Center site online to assist them with their case or form completion. (The videos are available in Spanish, and depending on the video, other languages as well). Another court provides telephone access from the clerk's office to a legal services eviction attorney and will work with court users to provide interpreters or bilingual assistance for this service.
- While most courts seem to be familiar with I Speak cards, usage varies. Some courts report using I Speak cards; others report knowing they exist and how to access them, but not having much use for them as they can almost always identify a court user's language. Other courts do not use I Speak cards and say they would be helpful.
- Most courts appear to rely on staff to proactively identify LEP court users, encourage the completion of interpreter request forms, and direct users to the appropriate destination

in the courthouse. It was also reported that bilingual security personnel often provide directional assistance to LEP court users.

- None of the courts interviewed or visited are using Quick Response (QR) codes on their signs or informational materials, though a few expressed they were in the process of considering their use, in particular for language access related information, self-help material, and for juror information.
- One court identified the use of video remote interpreting (VRI) as an important tool in providing language access to more remote or rural parts of the county. Another court felt that the most appropriate and successful use for VRI may be for services outside the courtroom.

## Overall Comments/Observations

- In addition to more funding to assist with signage and translation efforts, courts seem to want more statewide translations and signage with iconography that could easily be used by any court throughout California (e.g., prohibited items, security guidance, etc.).
- Together with statewide translations, some courts also mentioned they would benefit from uniform standardized signs for offices, services, courtroom rules, etc. At least one court expressed wanting to be able to just order signs as designed and translated by the Judicial Council.
- Courts want to be involved in the design process early on, particularly to ensure signage and wayfinding strategies remain flexible and can adjust to changing needs, moving offices and services, etc.
- At least one court requested that more resources and funding be allocated for staffing needs, rather than for signage, since staff resources are most needed to comply fully with the LAP.
- Some of the courts interviewed also focused on court websites and mobile accessibility of court information, trying to improve language accessibility online, the availability of interpreter request forms and information, and ability to access certain court services remotely. One court in particular discussed a desire to pursue court innovation grant funding for language access enhancements to its website as part of a larger web improvement effort.

## Site Visit Highlights: Wayfinding and Signage by Point of Contact

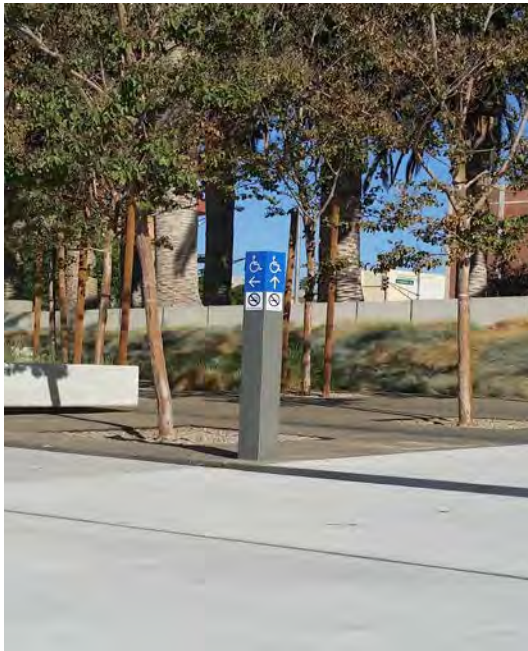
### Courthouse Exterior

The sites visited all presented pleasant, open exterior access to the courthouse, with clearly marked paths of travel and main entrances. In all instances, the buildings and landscaping were well maintained, and assisted in the ease of locating building entrances.

Parking options varied by court, usually correlating to the location of the court within a particular city and that area's congestion. For example, parking at the Spinetta Family Law Center courthouse consisted primarily of on-street metered parking and was challenging and expensive. To access the family court, users must compete for parking spaces with a significant number of government buildings, other courthouses, and businesses. In Pittsburg or the Old Solano Courthouse, by contrast, large public parking lots were adjacent to the courthouse and parking was easy and free. San Bernardino also has a free adjacent public parking lot; however, given its large volume, it is reportedly difficult to acquire a spot on busy court days. Public transportation options also varied, though none of the locations presented ideal options and, as reported to NCSC staff, most court users drive to court.



**Figure 1.** Outside of the Spinetta Family Law Center, Martinez, CA.



**Figures 2 (left) & 3 (above).** San Bernardino Justice Center. Entrances are well-marked, as are ramps, and (though not visible in these pictures) bicycle parking.



**Figure 4.** Old Solano Courthouse, Fairfield, CA. Old historical courthouse revamped and opened on September 2014.

Most courts interviewed or visited do not have an exterior point for public access, such as an after-hours drop box or exterior filing counter. A notable exception, however, is the San Bernardino Justice Center, which has both an after-hours drop box (see Figure 5) and a number of filing windows on the exterior of the building for various traffic matters (see Figure 6). According to court administrators and the facilities manager, the exterior filing windows are an important part of serving the public in a convenient and effective way, while keeping interior building functions running more smoothly by decreasing the number of court users having to go through security and clerks' offices.



**Figure 5.** San Bernardino Justice Center's Drop Box. Other courts had after-hours drop boxes inside the building, intended for use during the hours between clerk office closure (usually 3 p.m.) and building closure (4:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.). Users had to clear security to utilize those drop boxes, unlike in the San Bernardino example.



**Figure 6.** Traffic Windows on outside of San Bernardino Justice Center. Windows are for payment extensions and traffic school payment extensions, in addition to other traffic transactions and case information. Windows are secure. Although not visible in this picture, some of the text on the windows regarding receipts for transactions has been translated into Spanish.



With respect to building directories or wayfinding maps outside of courthouse buildings, only one of the visited courts (the Spinetta Family Law Center) had information outside of the courthouse entrance. Unfortunately, the signage and locations identified on the maps are outdated and efforts to update the information have been stalled because many of the buildings on the map include county or government buildings unrelated to the court, and coordination of efforts has not (yet) been fruitful.



Figure 7 (above). Before approaching the Spinetta Family Law Center, a building directory and map of public offices located in Downtown Martinez is provided.



Figure 8 (left). A close-up of the directory.

## Courthouse Entrances

Courthouse entrances were easy to locate and accessible to court users. All had wheelchair accessible ramps with clear signage. The amount of signage outside the courthouse doors varied significantly from courthouse to courthouse. The Pittsburg court, for example, had little to no signage outside the doors. The San Bernardino Justice Center’s glass doors had information on building accessibility, smoking laws, and security screening information, but given the bright lighting and window glare, information was hard to see. The Spinetta Family Law Center and the Old Solano Courthouse had security clearance signage. For the Old Solano Courthouse, where two signs currently provide security information, security staff suggested that one of the signs be provided in Spanish to facilitate information to Spanish-speaking court users (See Figures 14 and 15).



**Figure 9.** Entrance to the Spinetta Family Law Center, showing affixed signs regarding building hours (created by court manager), and entrance and exit signs (in red) with brief weapons warning. There are two other signs (in yellow) indicating doors open outwardly, and a white sign with text regarding non-smoking law.



Figure 10. Pittsburg courthouse entrance with the building name.



Figure 11. San Bernardino's entrance. The signage is on the glass doors.



Figure 12. Informational content on the courthouse



Figure 13. Entrance to Old Solano Courthouse.

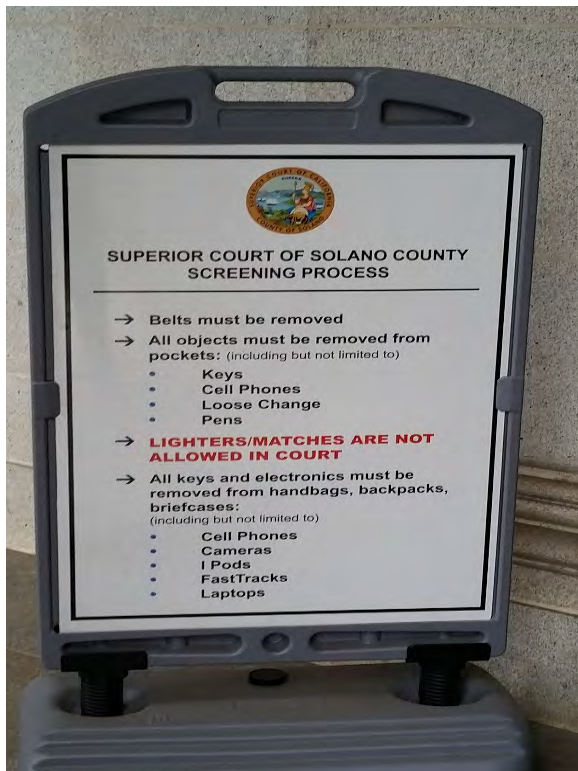


Figure 14. Screening process sign to left of entrance doors.



Figure 15. Security screening information to the right of entrance doors.

## **Courthouse Security Screening and Lobbies**

The courthouses visited were aesthetically pleasing, and by and large exhibited open spaces, bright lighting, and a seemingly good flow of court users without obvious bottlenecks. Security clearance appeared smooth, though none of the courthouses exhibited a particularly high volume of court users on the days and times visited.

The newly constructed courthouses, the San Bernardino Justice Center and the Pittsburg Court, both had large lobbies and security clearance areas. As can be seen from Figure 16, San Bernardino's lobby was quite expansive, with a significant amount of room for court visitors before lining up for security clearance. The large open area provides visitors with an opportunity to orient themselves and identify visual landmarks in the lobby before proceeding into the screening area. A prominent and very effective wayfinding feature of the San Bernardino Courthouse is that all public traffic is funneled in one direction upon entry; by comparison, the entry sequence of many courthouses involves more decision-making and visual scanning on the part of visitors.

While older and smaller, the Spinetta Family Law Center building makes good use of limited space to provide an open feeling while simultaneously providing appropriate visual markers that are easily recognizable by court visitors to help them quickly locate the service they need (see Figure 24). A mix of an old building with new construction and design, the Old Solano Courthouse is able to keep visitors moving through security seamlessly, in part due to a relatively low volume of court users combined with trained staff, and an open lobby immediately to the right of security with electronic signage, and a clear view of the Clerk's Office.



**Figure 16.** Entrance at San Bernardino Justice Center. Large, open, and light-filled lobby with clearly demarcated security screening lines. On the right-hand side is an information desk (depicted in Figure 21) accessible without the need for screening. Also on the right side, but outside the picture, is a large electronic sign with the day's docket (see Figure 20).

At the San Bernardino Justice Center several wayfinding and building information tools are located for visitor convenience in the open area before the security screening area. These include the following: Building directory and map (Figure 17), a kiosk for case information (Figure 18), and screening signage (Figure 19). In addition, there is a large electronic sign that displays all the matters calendared for any given day at that location (see Figure 20). Finally, there is an information desk (Figure 21) accessible to court users without the need to go through the security screening process. The purpose of the information desk is primarily to ensure that visitors are in the right location, given that there are a number of nearby government locations and the public is not always clear as to the appropriate location for their need. Although this is a nice feature in terms of public service, some court staff expressed concerns that staff exposure to unscreened public visitors could be a safety concern. This security concern has reportedly been addressed by placing a deputy at or near the information desk.



Figure 17. Building directory and map.



Figure 18. Case information/look-up kiosks located in each corner of the courthouse entry area prior to screening.

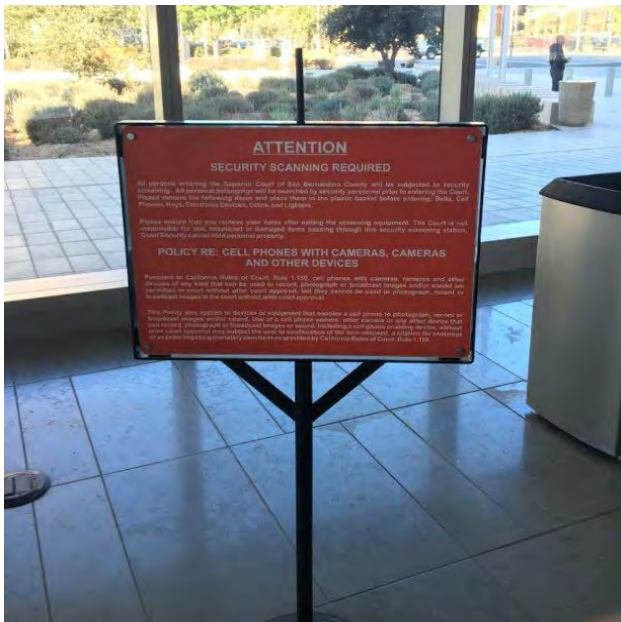
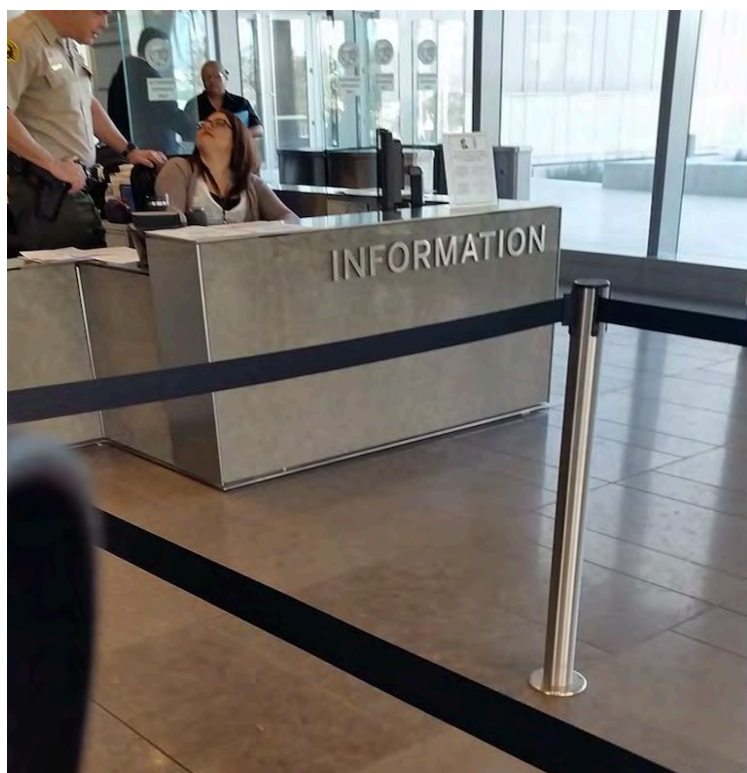


Figure 19. Security screening information. All signage related to security screening at the San Bernardino Justice Center appears on a red background.



**Figure 20 (left).** Large 6-screen electronic calendar with the cases on calendar in the building. The signs are in English and display the case name, case number, and courtroom number.



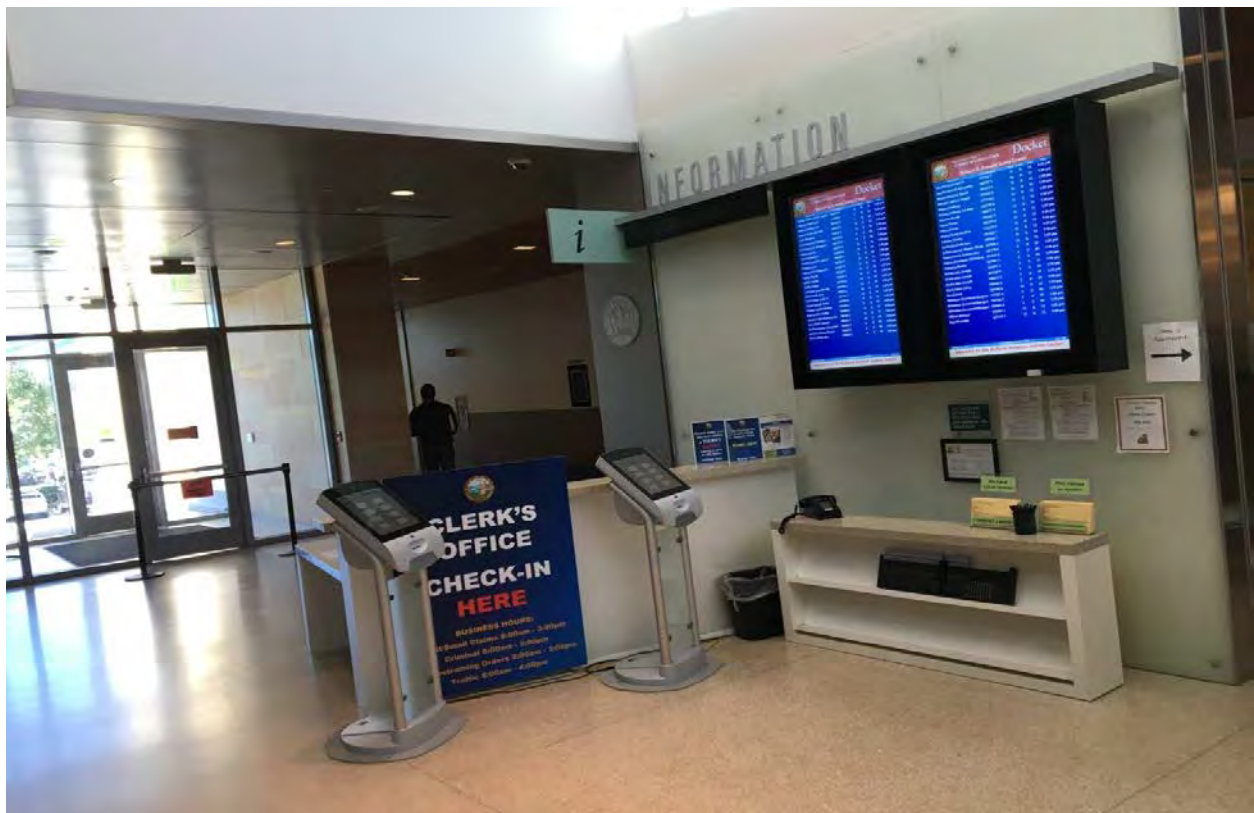
**Figure 21 (left).** Information desk accessible without the need for security screening. Brochures and other information at the desk are bilingual. It was also reported to NCSC staff that some screening station officers are bilingual and often provide direction assistance to court users as they exit the screening area.



The Pittsburg Court also has an effective and easily understood security clearance area, although signage was limited at the building entry. Immediately upon clearing the security screening area, court visitors find themselves facing an information desk and kiosk, which is staffed on busy days and times by volunteers. The information desk has an electronic queuing system (discussed in more detail below), which issues each user a number by which they are called for assistance, and electronic signage with the docket for that day's court proceedings. To the left of the information kiosk area is the jury assembly area, while to the right, visitors can access the clerk area, elevators, and courtrooms.



**Figure 22:** Pittsburg security screening area. Immediately after security is an information area, which includes electronic court calendar monitors and a Clerk's Office Check-In kiosk (Figure 23).

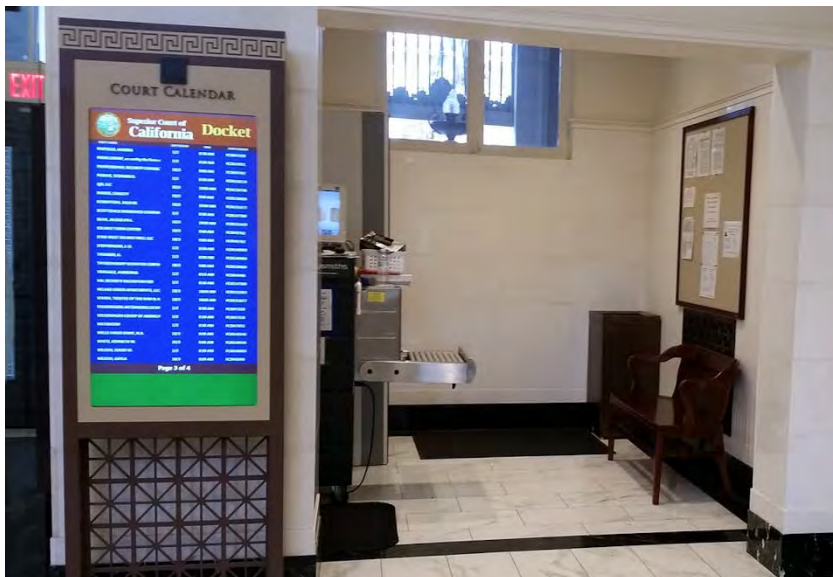


**Figure 23.** Check-in desk, right after security clearance, with an electronic queuing system. Staffed on busy days and times by volunteers. Electronic docket available. Includes bilingual signage such as holiday closure sign, bilingual comment cards (English and Spanish), bilingual housing clinic information, and bilingual informational brochures.

The Spinetta Family Law Center, though housed in an older building, also has an open entrance and lobby layout that utilizes design and signage to direct court users where appropriate. Immediately after the security clearance area, visitors find themselves facing the staffed Family Law Reception Desk (Figure 24), with eye-catching bilingual signage. There, users are assisted with the Qmatic™ system for the appropriate service they require.



**Figure 24.** Reception desk immediately after security clearance. Bilingual (English/Spanish) signage appears throughout, with a consistent color scheme. Staff assist visitors with an electronic queuing system, general questions, and Family Law Facilitator/Self-Help Center appointments and other services.



**Figure 25 (left).** The Old Solano Courthouse’s security clearance space. What is now the empty green space at the bottom of this electronic docket will soon provide information in Spanish for court users needing an interpreter (currently in use in Madera County). See Figure 73 for a sample of the soon-to-be-implemented signage.

Some courts interviewed by phone use security screening signage provided to courts by the Judicial Council’s Office of Emergency Response and Security. One of the courts provided the NCSC with the photo below (Figure 26), demonstrating usage of the sign in English and Spanish. Hard copies of those signs were provided to NCSC staff as well as to staff to the Translation, Signage and Tools for Courts Subcommittee.



Figure 26. Bilingual security clearance signage provided by the Office of Emergency Response and Security of the Judicial Council.

## Clerk's Office and Other Public Services

Clerks' offices, jury rooms, and self-help centers<sup>10</sup> are all critical points of contact between court users and the court, and likely see the highest volume of members of the public, many of whom are unfamiliar with the court and many of its functions. Therefore, navigating to these offices, wayfinding, and signage that provides both direction to these offices and information about their functions is key to a successful courthouse design from the user's perspective.

As mentioned above, three of the courts visited (both Contra Costa Superior Court buildings and the San Bernardino Justice Center) employ an electronic queuing system to facilitate the provision of clerk's office and self-help services. The system works by offering users a menu of choices, which varies based on court location and services offered. Users push a button that reflects their need and are issued a number to connect them to the appropriate service. A loudspeaker system, complemented by screens, shows the number being called and window or service to which to report. The queuing system allows for court users to sit and wait for their number to be called, without the need for lines, reducing or eliminating bottlenecks formed by lines and users not knowing where to go. At the Spinetta Family Law Center, for example, where the matters handled are related to family law issues and where large numbers of self-represented litigants come for assistance from the self-help center, the system works particularly well.

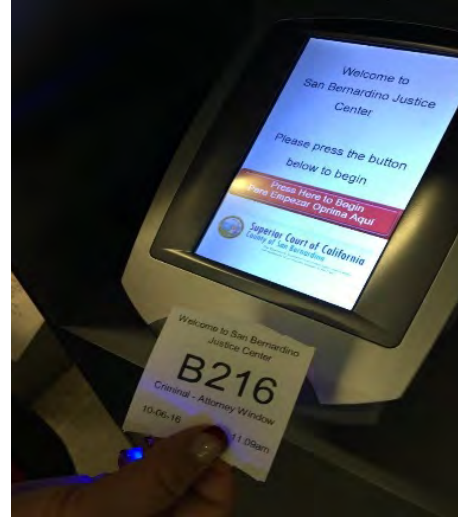
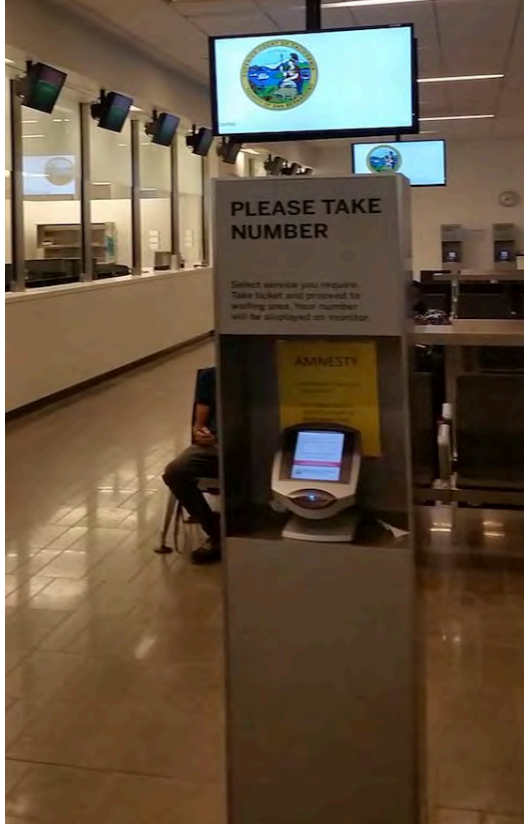


**Figure 27.** Spinetta Family Law Center's screen, showing numbers being called on the electronic queuing system as well as scrolling bilingual information on services. The menus at the queuing system kiosks themselves are not translated at this time but there are plans to translate them into Spanish.

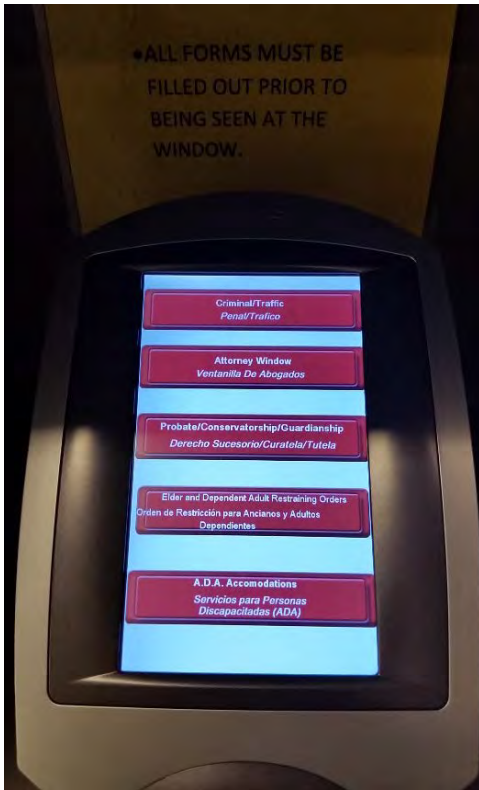
<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this report, the terms "self-help center" and "self-help services" include any service offered for the benefit of self-represented litigants, including the Family Law Facilitator, clinics or workshops offered by the court or partner legal services agencies, etc.



**Figure 28.** Spinetta Family Law Center's waiting area. Here, court visitors wait, seated, until their number gets called after checking in.



**Figures 29 (left) & 30 (above).** San Bernardino's electronic queuing system in the clerk's office, with kiosks and TV screens.



**Figure 31.** San Bernardino's electronic queuing system menu screen, in English and Spanish.



**Figure 32.** Electronic queuing system screen at the Pittsburg courthouse. See Figure 23 for full kiosk and location. The court has plans to translate menu options on the screen into Spanish.

Two of the courthouses visited, both of them in Contra Costa County, provided self-help services, and signage for these services was more robust, likely because of the nature of the service (information for self-represented litigants to assist them with navigating their court case effectively) and the nature of the court users served (non-lawyers, often first-time court visitors with little to no information on the court). Figure 24 (p. 33) and Figure 33 (right) demonstrate the clear signage. Although the Pittsburg sign is in English, brochures and flyers within the center are in English and Spanish.



**Figure 33.** Self Help Center signage at the Pittsburg courthouse.

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Figure 34. Pittsburg self-help center brochures in English and Spanish.

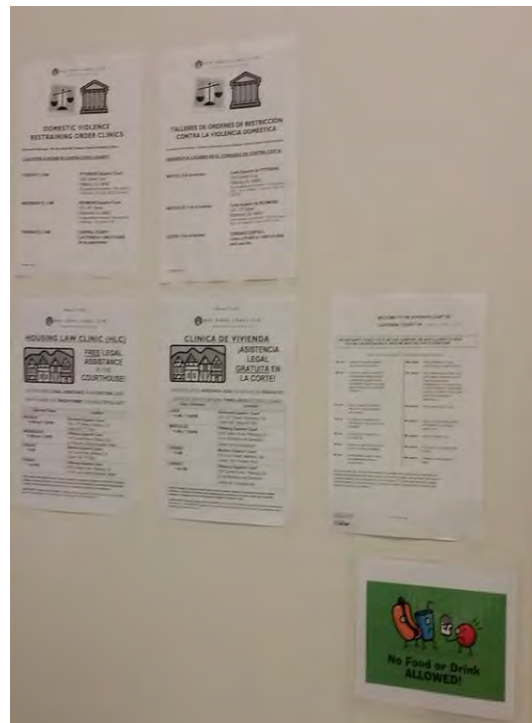


Figure 35. Pittsburg self-help bilingual flyers.

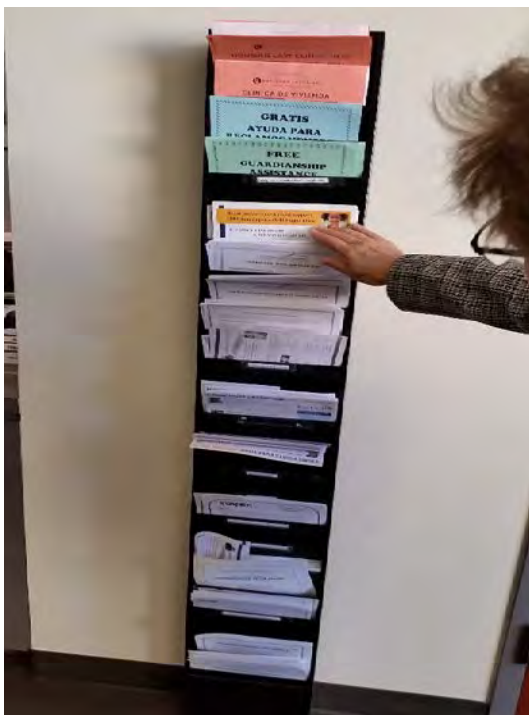


Figure 36. Spinetta Family Law Center’s bilingual (English/Spanish) self-help flyers.

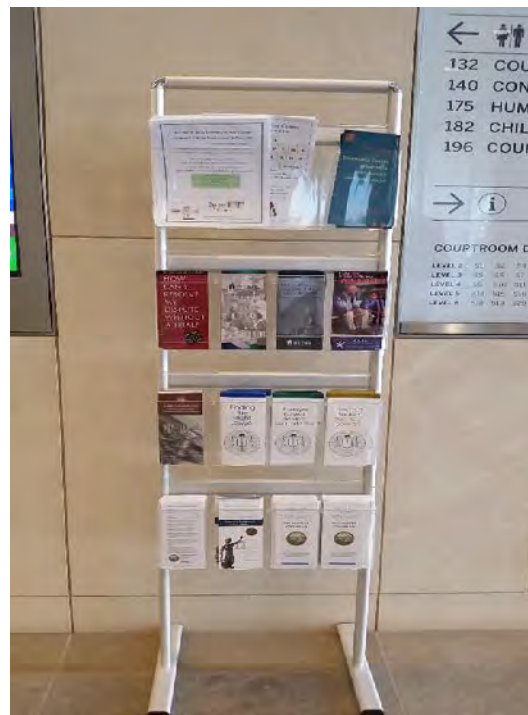


Figure 37. San Bernardino Justice Center’s bilingual informational flyers (Spanish on reverse of those shown).

Jury offices were similarly well-signed in the courthouses visited (those with active jury rooms, namely San Bernardino Justice Center and the Pittsburg Court), both in directory signs and through wayfinding and design. The offices were either located right upon the courthouse entrance, as in the case of Pittsburg, or on the first floor down a clear, well-marked hallway for San Bernardino. The rooms were large, open, and inviting, with screens for viewing orientation videos, and electronic kiosks for juror check-in.



**Figure 38 (top left).** Jury Assembly room at the Pittsburg Court, immediately visible upon entry and security clearance.

**Figure 39 (top right).** Jury Assembly at San Bernardino.

**Figure 40 (bottom left).** Signage toward Jury Assembly at San Bernardino Justice Center. Visible after security clearance.



## Courtrooms

The newer courthouses visited exhibited electronic signage with the day's docket (if still in session), and a sign or two regarding courtroom rules (e.g., no cell phones, no gum, etc.). Inside the courtrooms, there were very few, if any, signs.

Courtroom locations were clearly labeled in building directories and on signage, although there is no consistency in courtroom nomenclature. Three courthouses just gave their courtroom a number; others had a number for the courtroom and a different one for the department (housed within that courtroom). Of the courts participating in telephonic interviews, the numbering or labeling system for courtrooms also varied, with some calling their courtrooms "Rooms," and others calling them "Departments." Numbering sequences sometimes followed intuitively as a user makes their way through a building, and in others, numbering systems seemed random.



**Figures 41 (left) and 42 (above).** San Bernardino Justice Center's Courtroom. The electronic signage shows the days' docket, assistive listening device information, and a changeable sheet of paper (protected by plastic) with information including the judge's name, and courtroom dress and conduct code.



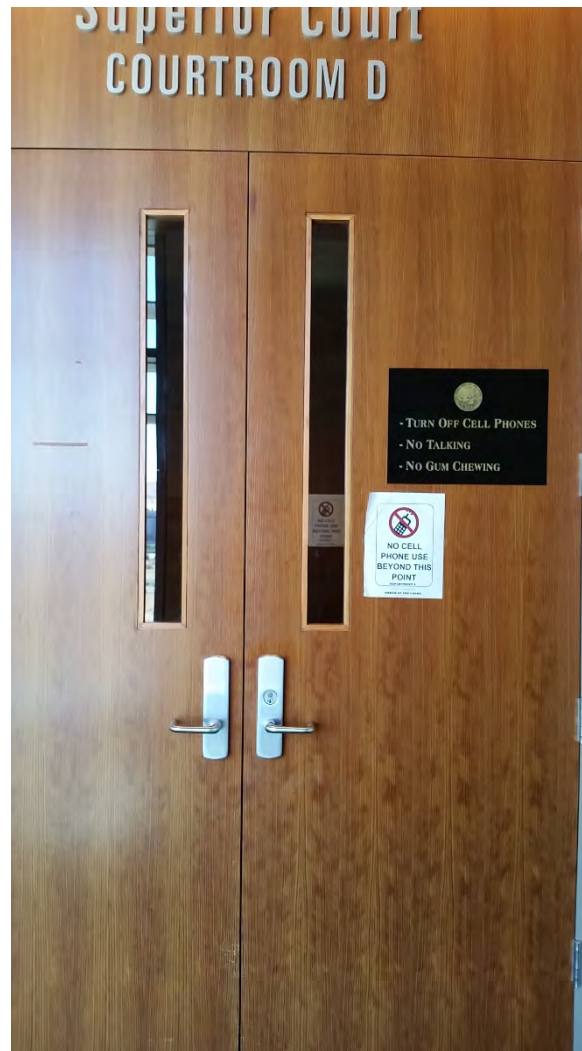
**Figure 43:** Inside of a courtroom at San Bernardino Justice Center.



**Figure 44.** San Bernardino courtroom. Two TV screens on either side, plus a large screen, operated by the judge for projecting images. The one sign in the courtroom, magnified in Figure 45 (next page) provides the courtroom rules of conduct in English.



**Figure 45.** Courtroom rules of conduct in San Bernardino courtroom.



**Figure 46.** Courtroom at the Pittsburg Court. Affixed sign provides courtroom rules (i.e., turn off cell phones, no talking, no gum chewing). The paper sign reiterates the ban on cell phone use. Other courtrooms did not have the additional paper sign.



**Figure 47.** Electronic sign by courtroom door with (when in session) docket for the day.

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Figure 48. Inside of Pittsburg courtroom. No visible signage.



Figure 49. Old Solano Courthouse courtroom door, with electronic sign affixed onto the door.



Figure 50. Old Solano Courthouse electronic docket on courtroom door.



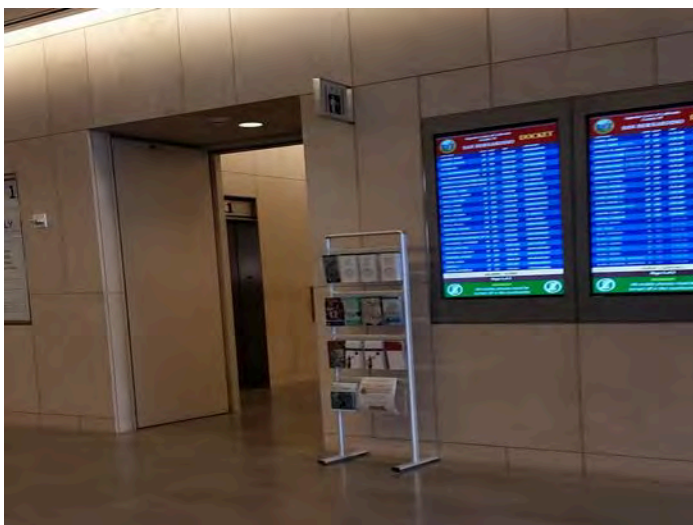
**Figure 51.** Provided by the San Benito Superior Court to illustrate ease of locating courtrooms. The use of signage placed perpendicular to the identified destination is a proven wayfinding strategy.

## General Wayfinding and Signage Observations

Overall, all of the buildings visited were good examples of how to employ wayfinding approaches into courthouse designs. Examples of important wayfinding features observed during the site visits included:

- Clear progression of public spaces
- Readily visible and accessible public service areas
- Clearly defined building organization
- Extensive use of natural light
- Quality artificial lighting (in spaces with no natural light)
- Visible public reception area
- Ease of accessibility
- Line of sight access down hallways and corridors
- Use of maps and directories at critical decision points (e.g., elevator areas, lobbies, public waiting spaces, corners, and beginning of corridors)
- Use of perpendicular signage, adequately spaced
- Use of landmarks such as public art or notable architectural features at key building decision points
- Use of differentiated materials that were consistently employed in different space types and service areas

All of the buildings visited generally appeared well thought-out programmatically and easy to navigate; however, each courthouse had unique features, especially in terms of signage. The various pictures below present a variety of strategies in the different courts visited to ease navigation to key points of contact throughout the building.



**Figure 52 (left).** San Bernardino Justice Center's additional docket electronic signs, visible after security. Also shown is typical perpendicular signage for restrooms, exit sign, and informational brochures.



Figure 53. San Bernardino signage at decision point before long corridor.

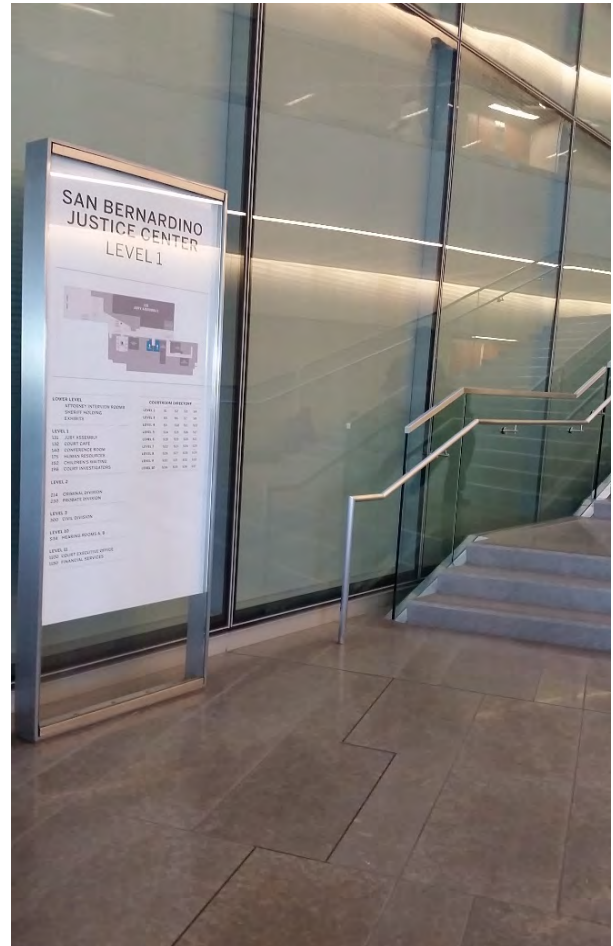
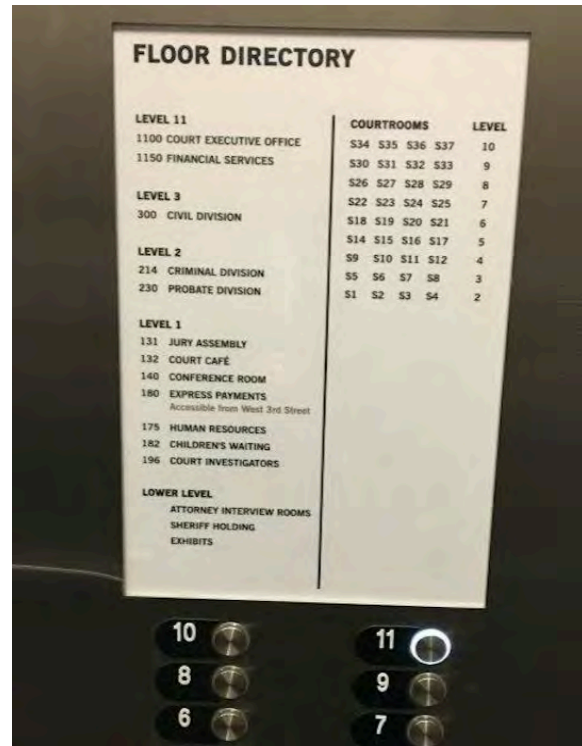


Figure 54. San Bernardino Justice Center directory and map by stairs (also visible when exiting elevator).



**Figure 55.** San Bernardino Justice Center’s affixed signage with option (designed by court staff) to include paper signage in a way that keeps a streamlined and clean look. Allows court flexibility to change signage as appropriate (e.g., other offices had the multilingual court closure sign as Columbus Day was approaching).



**Figure 56.** San Bernardino elevators. The need for flexibility in office locations led court administrators to request this enhanced feature, although replacement is currently expensive due to the need to hire the elevator company to assist with plastic cover removal.



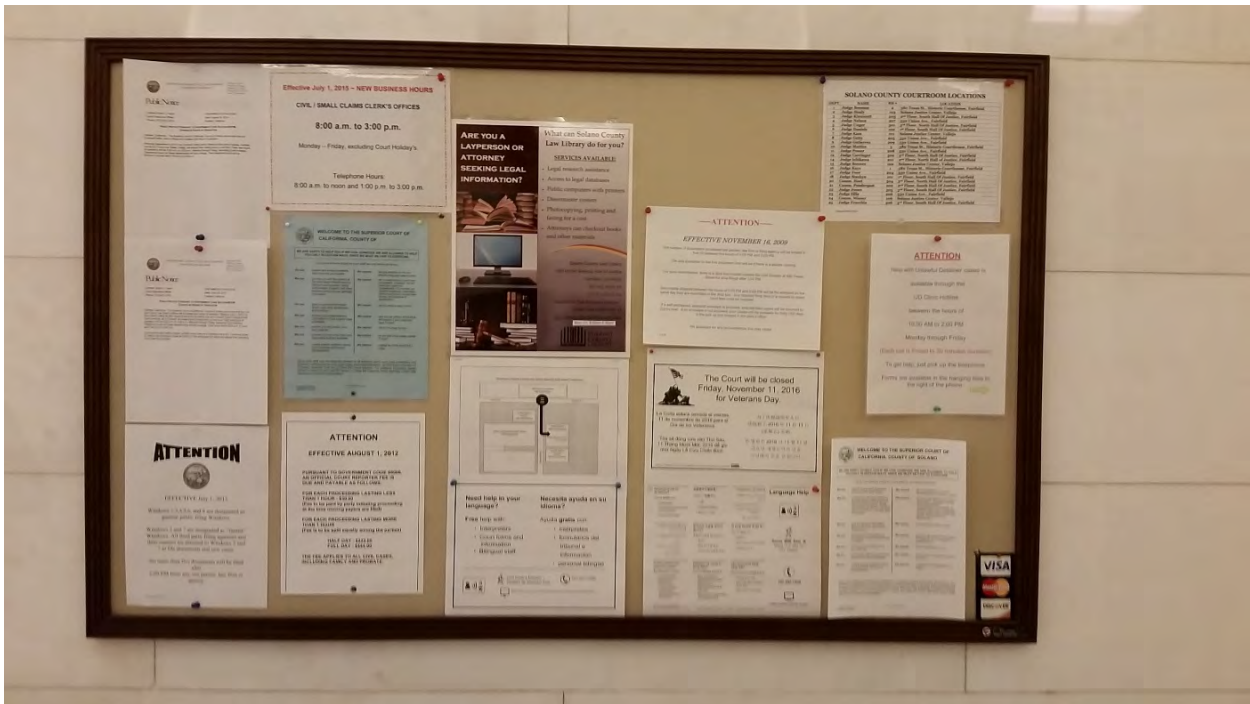


**Figure 57.** Old Solano Courthouse. Once court visitors turn right, they will see a building map to the left and a calendar of all matters for the day on the electronic sign to the right. Also visible from that location is the Clerk's Office (Figure 58 below).

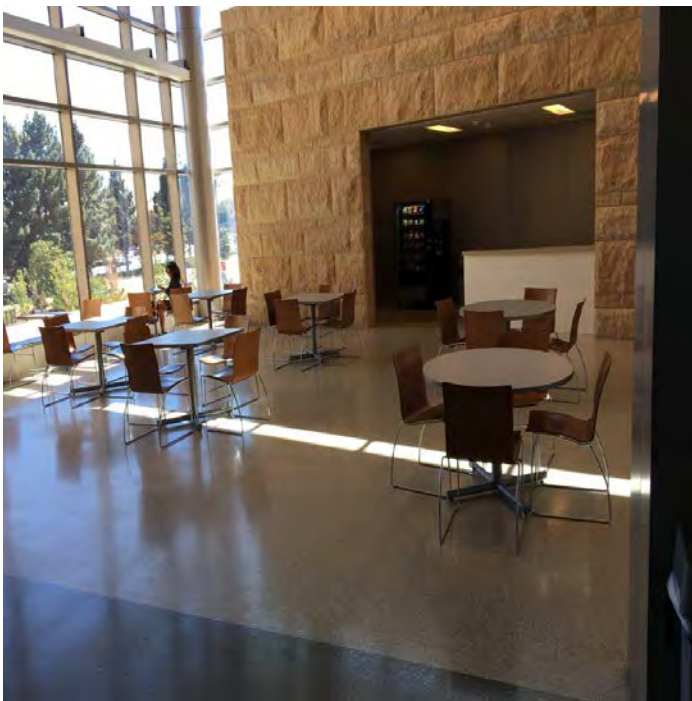


**Figure 58 (left).** Clerk's Office. Visible after clearing security screening, as well as clearly indicated on building map seen in Figure 57.

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**Figure 59.** Old Solano Courthouse—Bulletin board right outside Clerk’s Office provides referrals, the notice of availability of language access services, and other court notices.



**Figures 60 (top left) and 61 (top right).** The Pittsburg Court provides open space, like this break area with vending machines and space for children, on the second floor. Court users can meet with their attorneys, family members, or wait in a light-filled, open space.



Figure 62. Pittsburg Court’s building map located adjacent to the elevators, helping users orient themselves relative to their destination.



Figure 63. Spinetta Family Law Center’s effective strategy for directing users directly to the courtrooms upon clearing security screening.



Figure 64 (left). Santa Clara Superior Court. Sign depicting building map.

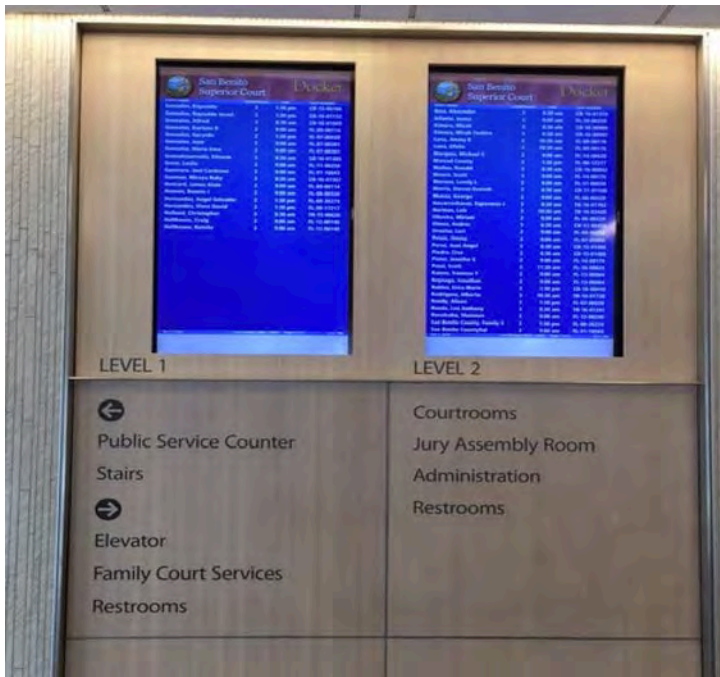
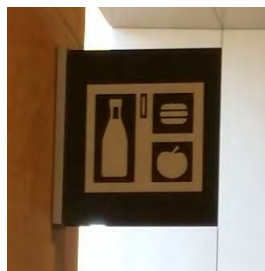


Figure 65 (left). Provided by San Benito. Illustrates the use of electronic signage together with static signage to provide information and directions.

### Use of Icons and Symbols

As stated above, the use of symbols or icons is limited to a few universal signs such as restroom signs. Below are some examples of symbols used.



## Wayfinding Strategies Used in Other Public Buildings

While court buildings are unique in many respects, there are other public buildings that are faced with the challenge of providing access to a large diversity of limited-English-speaking customers. Airports, for example, must accommodate large numbers of international travelers and speakers of myriad languages in ways that must be effective and streamlined. While the information airports must convey through signage lends itself more to the use of symbols and icons for universal application, there are important takeaways that may be applicable to courts. Most domestic airport signs are in fact only in English, but are often accompanied by a symbol, consistently used in all similar signage, to help travelers, regardless of language, identify the location they are seeking. Many also have a strong use of navigational maps and some have information kiosks in multiple languages. Another effective strategy at airports is the use by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) of videos, some without narration and with the use of graphics, to depict the process of security clearance, including prohibited items, placement of other items on the conveyor belts, removal of belts or other metals, etc. Because there is no narration or writing, there is no need to translate the videos, and the images are clear and universal enough to convey a clear message to most viewers while they wait to clear security.



**Figure 66.** An example of airport signage using icons to support the written message.



**Figure 67.** An example of airport signage using a mixture of icons and translated text.

Another example of signage used to assist multilingual customers can be seen in the health care industry, which depends on effective language access strategies in order to properly attend to

their patients. The health care field has often been a model for courts to follow with regard to language access, from the widespread provision of interpreters, to remote technologies, to signage. To further research how hospitals and other providers can inform California courts' signage and wayfinding projects, the Translation, Signage and Tools for Courts Subcommittee undertook a site visit to the Kaiser Permanente facility in San Leandro, California. The full report prepared by subcommittee staff is attached as Appendix C.

Some of the more notable observations include:

- The lobby incorporates multilingual capability through electronic signage by providing visitors with the ability to access building directories, maps, and other information on electronic screens in English, Spanish, and Chinese.
- Information desks staffed by clearly-identified volunteers greet and direct patients and visitors.
- Static directories are affixed to the wall.
- There is a button on the wall near the electronic signage with the message "Push here for live assistance" in English and Braille.
- There is multilingual information on patient rights posted on the walls.
- All Kaiser facilities (including other facilities visited by NCSC staff) contain a document named "We speak your language at \_\_\_\_\_" with the information on the particular facility included. It is translated into Spanish and Chinese. The San Leandro facility also provides translations in Vietnamese, Russian, and Farsi. Other languages are included at other facilities depending on local demographics. The document provides information on the availability of interpreter services at Kaiser.
- All facilities also post multilingual information on patient privacy rights.
- Several waiting areas have screens that display health education content in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The information can be changed and updated easily.
- There is a health education center with information displayed on monitors in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

To support a successful signage and wayfinding program, Kaiser also institutes the following:

- All staff are trained to be proactive in helping any person who appears lost.
- All stations have a telephone to contact a telephone interpreter service, and employees are all trained on its use.
- There are information sheets on a variety of topics that can be printed out in multiple languages.
- Interpreters are provided for all medical encounters in the building.

- If an in-person interpreter is not available, Kaiser San Leandro provides remote interpreting services via a flat screen monitor or an iPad.

Also within the healthcare industry, the Office of Minority Health (OMH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) conducted a study on language access in health care, and created [A Patient-Centered Guide to Implementing Language Access Services in Healthcare Organizations](#) to help healthcare organizations implement language access services for LEP individuals. The study includes a review of various signage and wayfinding strategies, including: best practices with regard to the types of signage to post throughout an organization; determining the quality of signage, including the quality of translations and literacy level used; tips on how to decide where to display signage; and information on training staff on signage issues. (See Resource Unit C: Signage and Wayfinding, pp. 114 to 126 for specific information.)

When planning a wayfinding strategy, the OMH recommends taking the following steps:

1. **Decide what type of signage to post.** Take Inventory of signs already present. Take pictures and/or walk through the building with a wayfinding expert. Think about what you are trying to achieve and the behavior you are trying to influence. Note signs that say the same thing with different phrasing (e.g., “Staff only” or “Authorized personnel only”) and group these signs together. Develop universal phrasing that can be understood at a low literacy level (4<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grade) for signs within the same groups. Replace existing signs with new ones where needed, and translate these into the most common languages encountered.
2. **Decide where to display signage.** Ideally, signage should be located in places having high contact with LEP individuals (e.g., entrances, registration desks, waiting rooms, etc.), specific departments, and other frequented areas, such as cafeterias.
3. **Determine the quality of signage.** Signage should be simple, accurate, culturally appropriate, and standardized to minimize confusion. Incorporate symbols to convey messages with as few words as possible. Because of the lack of standardized symbols, it is important to test them. Suggestions include surveys, focus groups, pilot testing, requesting feedback from LEP individuals, and conducting walkthroughs with wayfinding experts. Also involve stakeholders to ensure symbols are appropriate for the population and refer to the needs of the community.
4. **Train staff on new signage.** Conduct orientations to help staff become more familiar with the goals of signage and teach them organizational policies on developing new or updated signage.

Once the wayfinding plan is implemented, it is important to consider the needs of the LEP users and the organization's capabilities when deciding what additional activities to undertake. Finally, the wayfinding strategy should be monitored, evaluated, and updated on an ongoing basis.

Another important document to consider in developing a wayfinding and signage system is the [Model Hospital Policies and Procedures on Language Access](#) by the California Health Care Safety Net Institute. (See p. 26, which lays out 11 policies for XXX Medical Center.) The purpose of the language access policy is to ensure that all LEP patients and surrogate decision-makers are able to understand their medical conditions and treatment options, and to help XXX Medical Center staff to provide quality patient care to their LEP patients. In relation to signage, the policy states:

**"1008.0 Procedure for Language Accessible Hospital Signage.**

1008.1 Hospital signage at XXX Medical Center shall be designed to ensure access to LEP populations most frequently using XXX Medical Center facilities. Should the patient population of XXX Medical Center reach a proportion of 25% from a language group other than English, all hospital signage shall be designed in both English and that language. All signage required by state and federal statutes, regulations and licensing requirements will be translated into all languages other than English when a proportion of 5% of the patient population of XXX Medical Center has that language as their primary language. Additional languages for the translation and wayfinding signage shall be added at the discretion of hospital management."

Other government offices and agencies in the nonprofit sector face similar challenges in providing language access to its LEP users. As part of an ongoing initiative started in 2012 to help D.C. government agencies implement changes to better serve their LEP constituents, the Office on Latino Affairs (OLA), through its Language Access & Advocacy Program, conducted a study in 2014 to obtain feedback related to language access issues/difficulties and recommend solutions. The presentation materials for [Improving Language Access From the Perspective of Community-Based Nonprofits, FY14](#) outline the methodology, findings, and results of this study. In short, a combination of face-to-face interviews and a written survey were used to engage frontline individuals to obtain feedback related to accessing and providing language access services. A total of 107 individuals (public-serving nonprofit employees) at 54 non-profits were interviewed, with the written survey (which included questions on what types of difficulties are encountered and where those difficulties are encountered) accompanying each interview. The findings led to a number of recommendations, including personnel-related (e.g., hire more bilingual staff, provide frontline employees with more language access training, provide a full-time language access employee with other duties and provide more supervision over language access services), document-related (e.g., make already translated documents more accessible and prioritize documents needing translation), and signage-related recommendations. With regard to signage, recommendations included translating and posting more multilingual signage, especially room



names, availability of free interpretation services, and important notices, with a quality control mechanism for all newly translated signage.

Next steps for the Office on Latino Affairs included site visits to those facilities of the highest priority. In the presentation materials for its [Proposal for Multilingual Signage at Department of Human Services Taylor Street](#), a floor plan of the building and strategic locations for sign and language service placement and suggested content are provided. Recommendations included where to place translated brochures and I Speak cards; which signage information to translate, such as information at key points of contact and navigational signage; which languages are to be included in the translations, presumably based on community demographics; and samples of existing signage, where applicable. Several examples from the materials are included below.

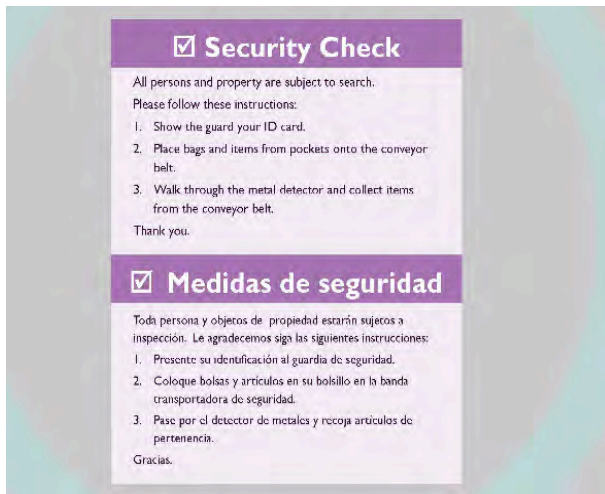


Figure 68. A proposed Security Instructions sign.



Figure 69. Proposed placement of translated materials and I Speak cards.

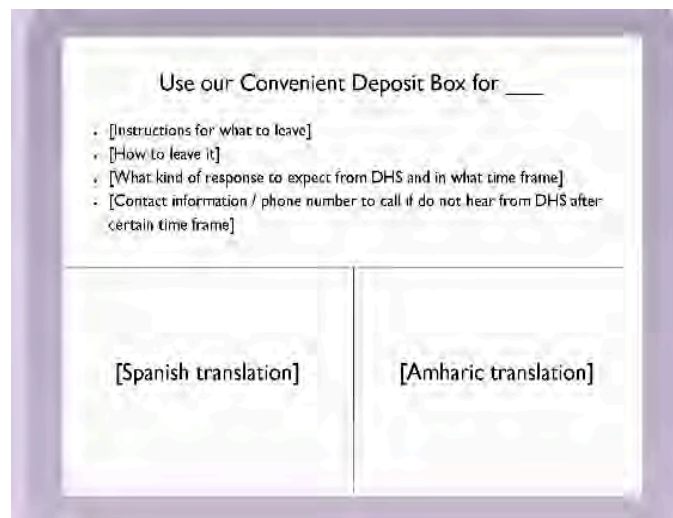


Figure 70 (left). A proposed drop box instructions sign, including suggested languages for translation and placement of those translations.

Figure 71 (right). A proposed drop box instructions sign, including suggested languages for translation and placement of those translations



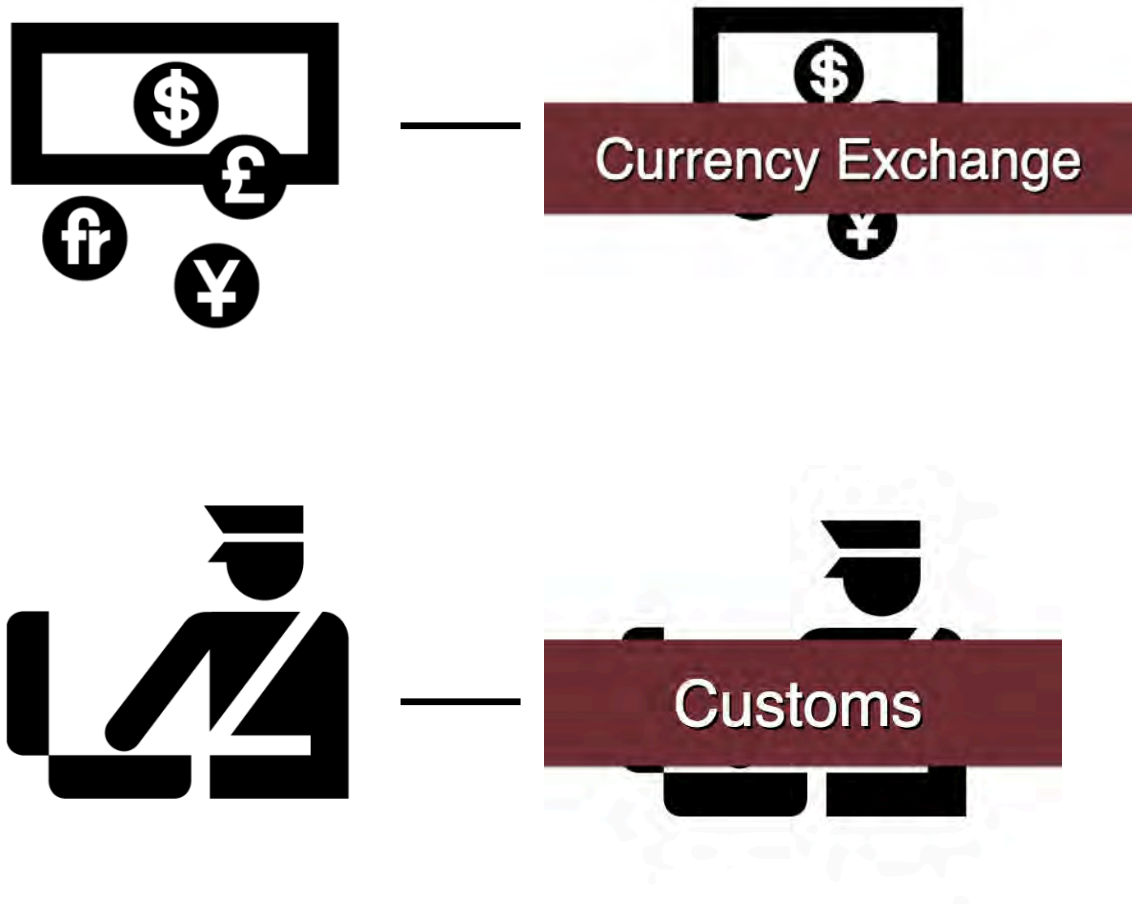
Figure 72. Building layout with signage placement indicated throughout

The federal government, through the United States Access Board, also supplies a comprehensive set of standards for accessibility under the [Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards](#) (UFAS standards). These standards provide extensive specifications and technical requirements for the design, construction, and alteration of federal and federally-funded buildings so that they are barrier-free. While these standards were designed for accessibility of buildings by persons with physical disabilities, the model can be looked to when developing a uniform wayfinding and signage strategy for language access in the courts.

Of note, the document sets forth that its purpose is to provide more uniform and consistent access standards, “to minimize the differences between the standards previously used by four agencies that are authorized to issue standards, and between those standards and the access standards recommended for facilities that are not federally funded or constructed.” The objective is to create uniformity between federal requirements and those of state and local governments. The development of these standards included guidelines used in other sectors that include engagement and input from organizations representing people with physical disabilities. Important instructions and definitions are then provided, and specifications are listed for various elements. [Section 4.30 of the UFAS standards](#) focuses on signage, and provides for standardization in terms of appearance (e.g., character proportion and color contrast), location (relative to doors, mounting height), and use of symbols (i.e., that all accessible facilities should use the international symbol of accessibility).

Finally, another resource to consider is the [Wayfinding & ADA Signage](#), by Creative Designs, as part of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Continuing Education Program. This presentation illustrates that a central component of wayfinding is signage, which includes a mix of identification, directional, orientation, and regulatory interior and exterior signage. However, as the presentation also points out, signage should not just be limited to words. Symbols are important for communicating verbal messages, enhancing the words on signage, and resonating visually with all visually disabled people including those who do not speak the native language. The presentation goes on to give examples of symbols and their messages, as shown below.





The presentation cautions against pitfalls, such as too many colors and symbols and unreadable signage, touches on guidelines, such as kerning and mounting height of signage, and includes a number of visual examples illustrating the use of signage in several case studies.

It is critical that California courts, as they implement and expand wayfinding and signage strategies, continue to look at how other industries, such as air travel and healthcare discussed above, as well as federal and state government offices and services continue to evolve their own systems to serve and improve access to their users. Through continued examination of practices across sectors, together with assessments and monitoring of efforts at the local level, California courts can more effectively further strategies to make courthouses throughout the state more responsive and accessible to LEP users and all court visitors.

# Recommendations and Best Practices for Wayfinding and Signage in the California Courts

## Overall Wayfinding Strategies

As stated in this report, wayfinding systems are designed to quickly inform people of their surroundings in unfamiliar physical environments and help users of a space navigate it with ease. When a person enters an environment that is foreign to them, they look for visual cues (both consciously and unconsciously) to inform them of their location and orient themselves as to their desired destination. Wayfinding systems are designed using architecture, lighting, landscape, and other visual elements such as elevators, stairs, information desks, etc. Effective wayfinding strategies can complement signs, or even reduce the need for signage. For example, court visitors are more likely to be able to intuitively move about a building to find services in a courthouse with a simple and straightforward floor plan and circulation system. Ideally, signage elements build upon wayfinding and navigation systems to further facilitate the use of a space.

Effective wayfinding techniques help all court users, not just LEP persons. Everyone who must come to court will benefit, and the results will also improve accessibility to persons with low literacy and others who may be stressed, intimidated, or anxious when seeking court services. Recent decades have seen an increased diversity in court users accessing California courts, representing various cultural and linguistic backgrounds and ranging in their understanding of courts, from novices of the court and legal system to experienced consumers. Additionally, with the dramatic increase in self-represented litigants coming to California courts, particularly in civil matters, courts have experienced a rising need for publicly-accessible spaces and offices, such as self-help centers, alternative dispute resolution offices, and other programs, serving court users attempting to navigate a judicial system and processes unfamiliar to them. With these changes has come the need to make courthouses more responsive, more user-friendly, more customer-centric, and more accessible to the public they serve.

The Judicial Council's California Trial Courts Facility Standards represent a recognition of the importance of accessible courthouses in serving the public and enhancing public trust and confidence in the courts. As detailed in the findings above, newer courthouses, built with the Facility Standards, have implemented many successful design strategies to enhance wayfinding for visitors. Some older courthouses built before the creation of the courthouse design standards also exhibit successful wayfinding strategies. As an example, the Spinetta Family Law Center was built more than 10 years ago and exhibits a very clear wayfinding system.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> While much of the signage in the courthouse is not original from the building's construction, the Court has been able to improvise a signage system to make the building work for its diverse visitor population.

As required by the California Rules of Court,<sup>12</sup> courts that are expanding into new facilities or expanding existing facilities must be involved with the designers and architects. It is critical that this involvement occur early in the process of design and signage strategy development so that court staff and administrators have an opportunity to fully discuss and determine how signage will complement court operations in the new or modified building and ensure design plans are responsive to the court's needs. This will ensure not only that the Facility Standards are being used, but also that the ways in which they are being implemented and applied will meet the needs of court users and those of individual courts.

## General Wayfinding Considerations

- When developing new courthouses, strive to create simply arranged floor layouts to assist users in orientating themselves inside the building.
- Locate high volume functions close to the main public entrance.
- Simplify public traffic flow in terms of direction and complexity (e.g., directional choice points, alternate corridors, too many doors).
- Provide direct sight lines to important functions in public corridors so court users can easily navigate the space and orient themselves.
- Use the building landscaping and architecture to signify the building entrance and entry sequence.
- Provide space within the lobby for persons to orient themselves before entering through the screening area.
- Provide visual access to the outdoors in all public spaces to serve as an orientation guide inside the courthouse.
- Provide well-marked visual architectural features or landmarks near decision points within the courthouse (e.g., windows, doors, skylights, public art, color, texture, and scale).
- Ensure that all interior spaces are well lit. Introduce natural light where possible and provide effective artificial lighting strategies throughout.
- Make specific and intentional interior design decisions aimed at indicating destination points within the courthouse to enhance orientation (e.g., stylized door types, door surrounds, and interior glazing).
- When choosing finishes, avoid overly uniform or overly complex interior spaces. (Ideally, uniformity and differentiation work in tandem or “fit” together.)<sup>13</sup>,

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<sup>12</sup> [California Rule of Court 10.181\(b\)](#) states that decisions related to matters such as construction, renovation, and design of court facilities must be made in consultation with the affected court, when appropriate.

<sup>13</sup> For more detailed recommendations, see those provided by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (<http://universaldesign.ie/>), which include a number of considerations regarding uniformity and contrast in finishes.

## General Signage Considerations

Signage must complement a building's wayfinding and navigation system to ensure users can locate their destination. Signage starts at the exterior of a building, ensuring necessary information and direction is provided to visitors regarding entry, exit, security requirements, building function and activities or services, and hours of operation. Access paths and services for persons with disabilities must be clearly marked, as well as the availability of parking options for cars and bicycles. Interior signage is particularly critical to identify offices and services, provide directional assistance, and orient visitors within the building. Regulatory signage addressing evacuation methods, smoking restrictions, etc. are also vital.

Suggestions for implementing a successful signage program include:

- Provide a coordinated approach to signage throughout the building, avoiding differences among floors, departments, or functions.
- Place signs in locations where major decisions must be made. Use signage carefully to ensure the right balance between reliance on architectural features that facilitate wayfinding and complementary signage that does not overburden a space and cause confusion for court users.
- Locate building directories in the same location on every floor.
- Place signs perpendicular to destination entrances (preferable for visibility) or parallel to destination entrances.
- Employ, as much as possible, international symbols for appropriate functions or elements.
- Locate signs in repetitive locations on multiple floors.
- Space signs so that successive signs are completely visible to each other.
- Ensure uniformity of signs in terms of color, font style, and scale.
- Use sans serif or other legible boldface font types.
- Use high-contrast colors.
- Provide specific information on signs at major decision points.
- Where feasible, incorporate the use of scannable codes, such as QR codes, into the signage program to supplement building and service information using mobile technology.

## Signage Flexibility

Given that the occupancy and use of court facilities will typically change over time, it is imperative that signage systems be developed with flexibility in mind. Such changes can affect the use of the courthouse in terms of jurisdiction and types of cases being heard, the type and

deployment strategy of court services, and court ancillary support areas. Through careful collaboration, court executives and their designees are in the position to ensure that signs and wayfinding techniques remain flexible enough to accommodate the various anticipated (and unanticipated) needs and changes that a particular court building may go through.

Examples of possible strategies include:

- Installing signs that allow court staff the ability to change out sign information by creating glass- or plastic-covered spaces for inserting paper signage;
- Replacing static directories with magnetic boards where signs could be affixed but also changed out and public notices could be posted;
- Providing extra space on individual office or department signs that allow for affixing court notices and other information; and
- Increasing use of electronic signage as a means to enhance static signage.

## Multilingual Signage

Despite the overall success of wayfinding strategies currently being employed (particularly in newer buildings), much work remains to be done in terms of building wayfinding for LEP individuals. The Facility Standards provide minimal information regarding language strategies, with only a brief mention of multilingual signage. From a policy implementation perspective, the Judicial Council should more deliberately and thoroughly integrate language access considerations, practices, and recommendations, including multilingual signage, into the Facility Standards.

As explained above, courts struggle with knowing how many signs are necessary for appropriate communication and when too many signs may cause additional confusion. Adding a multilingual component to signage exacerbates the concerns over signage overload. When deciding what types of signage to post, courts should first take an inventory of existing signs. In addition to using a wayfinding expert to walk through the building to identify existing systems and critical decision points, courts should consider what information, if any, should be provided at each juncture: Is or should the sign be directional? Informational? Regulatory? Is signage necessary or are there other building and design features sufficient for clear wayfinding? It is important to make a consistent decision regarding where to display the signs; for example, should there be signage (and what should it be) at all initial points of contact (entrances, reception or information desks, front desks, waiting areas, clerks' offices, etc.), as well as at specific departments and other frequented areas?

With respect to translated content on signage, the principles of the Judicial Council's [Translation Protocol](#) should be followed. Messages on signs must be clear, legible, and in plain language,



both for English-speaking court users as well as LEP users who may understand basic English. Plain-language signage will also facilitate translation into other languages and comprehension by LEP court users reading the signage information in their primary language.

In order to understand the signs needed and develop a strategy for signage and its translation, courts may want to group signs by concept so that words used are consistent, the same wherever possible, and reduced to as few words as possible so that all users, but especially LEP users, can easily see and read the signs. Signage should be simple, accurate, culturally appropriate, and standardized to minimize confusion. When the same message is conveyed (e.g., “Authorized Personnel Only,” or “Clerk’s Office”), signage should use the same phrasing, both to avoid confusing the public, and for efficiency and cost-effective reasons, since having one adopted phrase throughout the building (or set of buildings) means that just one translation into each language is necessary. Once these best practices in signage development are achieved in English, signage can be translated. Signage that is specifically required by building life safety codes, such as emergency exit signs, should be designed in accordance with such codes. The signs most appropriate for translation for language access purposes are those addressing court functions and operations.

One of the most challenging decisions is determining into how many languages a sign should be translated. The California Language Access Plan makes clear, in Recommendation #39, that “courts should have all public signs in English and translated in up to five other languages based on local community needs . . .” For many courts, particularly those that have significant LEP populations in their communities, this means signage should be in at least the top five languages whenever possible. This should especially be the case with signs that are particularly important and necessary for adequate access, and where space is available to incorporate all the languages without detriment to the message conveyed. Where significantly challenging to translate an entire sign into five languages, a court may decide to translate key portions of the sign into that county’s top five languages. In a few locations in the state, where LEP court users may appear in significantly reduced numbers and court and community statistics demonstrate that translation into the top two or three languages would ensure that the vast majority of that county’s LEP population would be provided access, a court may decide to only translate signage into those two or three other languages. Courts are encouraged to look at the [Translation Protocol](#) and the [Document Translation and Language Access Population Tool](#)<sup>14</sup> developed by the NCSC to assist courts with decisions regarding languages spoken in their communities and estimated costs for translation. An approach where fewer than five languages are included in the more important signage may be appropriate so long as the court remains vigilant in gathering data on community demographics and being responsive to the needs of its constituents. Courts should remain

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<sup>14</sup> The Document Translation and Language Access Population Tool is available to court staff via the Judicial Resources Network at <http://jrn.courts.ca.gov/programs/lep/resource.htm>.

proactive in requesting community feedback from other social and legal service providers regarding the actual language needs of their communities, and implement signage strategies that are consistent with those needs.

With regard to the translation of signage and information itself, some courts expressed during interviews and visits a desire for standardized translations, particularly because they may be hesitant pursuing the translation on their own or in-house, and/or local funding issues may impact their ability to complete translations. In response to these concerns, the Judicial Council should continue to encourage courts to use its master contract<sup>15</sup> with its translation agency for signage and other local translations, but perhaps more importantly, given that site visits revealed that not all court staff working with language access services are aware of the master contract availability, ensure it is communicated to all relevant persons in local courts, including Language Access Representatives and others making signage and translation decisions at the local court level. Using the Judicial Council's master contract minimizes the need for individual courts to look for translation agencies, issue requests for proposals, or have to manage local contracts. Additionally, to the extent that signage content is applicable on a statewide level, even if sign design and format may vary locally, the Judicial Council may be able to contract and fund translations into the state's top eight to ten languages, and provide such translations to courts for their adaptation and local use.

By the end of fiscal year 2016–2017, the NCSC, as part of its contract with the Judicial Council, will provide up to three plain language multilingual signage content samples in English and at least eight additional languages for identified signs commonly present, or needed, in courts across the state. The sample signage content and the translations will be developed so that it is customizable to fit local needs. The NCSC will also provide content for a signage and phraseology glossary for common signs to encourage the use of standardized signage content statewide. All sample signage, translations, and signage glossaries will be made available to courts via the [Language Access Toolkit](#).

Signage can include words, symbols, pictures, or a combination of all three elements to convey a message. Symbols are particularly ideal for communicating with LEP court users, individuals with low literacy, and others who may have difficulty reading text on a sign, particularly if it is in English only. There are currently no standards for courthouse symbols, so symbols that are universally recognized for services a court may offer must first be identified. The language access icon developed for use by the Judicial Council in its notices and provided to local courts for use on websites and print materials and signs is an example of a new symbol that, through consistent and statewide use, will increasingly be recognized and identified as related to language access services, and can be used by courts to identify those services.

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<sup>15</sup> Available at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/lpa-transcend-translations-ma-201608.pdf>.

Finding symbols that convey complex legal terminology may prove unlikely, but court self-help centers and legal aid providers are increasingly developing symbols or icons to easily identify various case types, especially online (see symbols used at the [Contra Costa Virtual Self-Help Center](#) and [lawhelpca.org](#) as examples). The health care field and other industries such as airports use symbols whenever possible. However, because of the universal applicability of airport functions and hospitals, for example, finding universal symbols may be somewhat less challenging than finding universal symbols for courts, which deal with a legal system that varies not just from country to country, but from state to state, and sometimes even within a state. As a starting point, courts should refer to existing universal symbols developed for various purposes through the American Institute for Graphic Arts (AIGA), downloadable [here](#) and the many signs available through [The Noun Project](#).

## Electronic Signage

The use of electronic signage is one of the more significant changes in courthouse wayfinding in the last decade. Electronic signs, whether to display dockets for an entire building or for an individual courtroom, or to provide assistance via an electronic queuing system, enhance the user-friendly environments of the visited court buildings. Just as importantly, they serve the purpose of better assisting courts with administration and workflow. Electronic signs are well-suited for information that changes often (such as court dockets) and other information that lends itself to dynamic visual representation, such as short and brief messages that provide resources or information to court users. They can also be rotated in several languages, play videos demonstrating a particular process (such as security clearance), and display information for users in waiting areas where a static sign may go unnoticed or not provide enough information.

The electronic docket signage, which helps court users identify their court hearing time and location, currently does not provide much multilingual capacity. For the most part, those signs provide case name and location information, which would not require translation. However, some of the docket signs can also display information appropriate for translation, such as courtroom rules or advisements regarding interpreter availability, or other court-specific information. Madera county, and soon Solano county, are two courts that use, or plan to use, some of the space on these signs to alert court users of the availability of an interpreter (see Figure 73).

PARTY NAME	SEPT./ROOM	TIME	CASE NUMBER
AARHUS, JEFF & ELLEN	3/208	9:30 AM	FCSD41042
ABRAM, KEVIN DEMETRIUS	8/205	9:00 AM	FCR297040
ABULENCIA, IVAN MEJICO	2/108	1:30 PM	FCR305080
ACOSTA AGUILAR, ANTONIO	14/201	8:30 AM	FFL143170
ACOSTA, IVAN	11/208	8:30 AM	FCR321396
ADAMS, TANNER CHRISTIAN	24/106	9:00 AM	VCR225809
AGUILAR, EDUARDO MISAI	4/207	8:30 AM	FCR322174
AISLE ONE MERCHANDISING, LLC	16/1	8:30 AM	FCSD45554
AUTIN, DOMINGUJODAD M.	14/201	8:30 AM	FFL143141
AUTIN, RHEA L.	14/201	8:30 AM	FFL143141
ALLEN, ARICTIMOTHY	4/207	8:30 AM	FCR324038
ALLEN, CORNELIOUS EZELL	11/208	8:30 AM	FCR308871
AMADO, JEANETTE MARLENE	17/204	8:30 AM	FCR291946
ANDERSON, KENNETH JEFFERY	24/106	8:30 AM	VCR227548
ANDRADE, CAMILO	14/201	9:30 AM	FFL143124
ANDRADE, MARIA TERESA	14/201	9:30 AM	FFL143124
ARGIMENEZ-GOMEZ, NIKOD	20/304	9:30 AM	FFL144616
ARRIZON, RUBEN ANTONIO LEPE	TBA/TBA	1:00 PM	VSC082280
ARROYO, ELVIRA	20/304	9:30 AM	FFL144616
AVALOS, GABRIEL	17/204	8:30 AM	FCR323336

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Inform Court Staff if you need an Interpreter –  
Infórmele al personal judicial si necesita intérprete

**Figure 73.** In the area with the green background, this draft of the Solano signage says: “Inform Court Staff if you need an interpreter – Infórmele al personal judicial si necesita intérprete.”

Other courts also stated that similar electronic docket signage outside of courtrooms lend themselves to further customization, with the ability to insert scrolling text (at the bottom) in several languages regarding interpreters, or other information regarding courtroom rules and conduct, courtroom closures, etc.

The Judicial Council and individual courts should explore the needs courts have for short, translatable text that could be included in these docket signs. To the extent some of the information is applicable statewide (or desired by a majority of courts), the Judicial Council could undertake the text translation into the state’s top eight to ten languages and provide it to courts for local use and adaptation. Examples of the information that could be inserted on electronic docket signs include: how to request an interpreter, location and services of the self-help center (particularly for dockets with large numbers of self-represented litigants), information to litigants

on calendar such as verifying that their name is on the calendar and that they have checked in with the clerk, and other information relevant to having a matter on calendar.

An electronic queuing system and accompanying monitors offer great potential and flexibility in the area of multilingual signage and information. As described, some courts are already offering queuing system menu screens in English and Spanish. Since the technology exists, these systems should allow for users to select the language in which they want to see the menu of services, and the numbers issued by the system should, whenever possible, connect a court user to a staff member who speaks the court user's primary language, or at least associate the number with the need for language access services, so court staff can more efficiently secure an in-person or telephone interpreter for their interaction with the LEP court user.

In addition, as described above, at least one court is using the monitors that display the electronic queuing numbers being served to also provide bilingual information to court users while they wait. While local courts should explore ways in which these screens can be used more proactively to provide multilingual information, the Judicial Council may be able to provide standardized information in plain language (and translate it) for courts to adapt locally. If finding information that could be applicable for courts statewide proves unfeasible, the Facility Standards discussing electronic signage may be able to recommend ways in which the electronic queuing monitors can be utilized more efficiently to provide information to all court users. Some of the types of multilingual information that could be included in electronic queuing system monitors include: information on how to use the queuing system itself, interpreter and other language access information, information on self-help and other lawyer or legal services resources in the court and court's community, basic case-type information for electronic queuing systems located in case-type specific areas (such as family law), and videos (ideally without narration/words, just visual) depicting courtroom conduct and procedure. Closed-captioned videos may also be used, but given the placement of screens and the inability to provide captioning in more than one language at the same time, the use of narrated videos for these monitors is more limited. Care should be taken that scrolling screens move at a slow pace to ensure the ability of viewers to read the content, and that the content is reasonably short given the medium and space.

If these electronic signs are built through a particular company, or if particular specifications are used for contracts with electronic sign providers as well as with electronic queuing system providers, standard contract language and spec requirements could be helpful for courts as they undertake their own signage enhancement programs. The Judicial Council's facilities office could assist courts in developing performance requirements for electronic queuing systems and other electronic signage to allow for multilingual capabilities.

As the cost of electronic signs decreases, courts should continue to explore using them for applications traditionally handled by static signs. As reported by at least one court, electronic signage can be used for security screening, allowing flexibility as screening rules change. Similar to TSA-approved videos, electronic signs at security areas could project videos, without narration, showing the process of clearing through security. Electronic signs can also be used to provide information to court users while waiting for a service, or show videos addressing different court processes such as Family Court Services mediation, courtroom conduct, etc.

In planning for the expanded use of electronic signage, courts should be mindful that implementation and maintenance of electronic signs often require court staff support, or support from the signage vendors, which can be costly. Therefore, while the cost of electronic signage may be decreasing, there are attendant costs with support, maintenance, updates, and modifications to electronic signage that may not exist with static signs. These should be taken into consideration and accounted for when planning an electronic signage program.

### **Notice of Available Language Access Services**

The Notice of Available Language Access Services approved by the Judicial Council in February 2016 is, as reported above, not yet in widespread use across courts. In part, this may be due to lack of awareness and need for further communication to courts regarding the sign's existence. However, some of the courts that are in fact using the sign or are aware of it and chose not to use it report that they would like it to be more customizable to local needs. The Judicial Council should obtain more information from Language Access Representatives in relevant courts as to how this sign could be made more appealing and user-friendly for courts that do have a need for it, and then institute those changes and re-distribute the new tools both through direct communication to the courts and through the [Language Access Toolkit](#).

### **Further Considerations**

Ultimately, the goal of wayfinding and signage is to ensure all court users can find and access court services effectively and instill trust and confidence among the public in the court system as one that is responsive to customer needs and procedural fairness. To fully understand and know the needs of court users and assess whether existing or contemplated wayfinding techniques and signage strategies are or will be successful, the court users themselves must be engaged in the process.

To assist with signage and translation decisions, the Judicial Council may be able to assist courts in conducting assessments at the local level by court staff, Language Access Representatives, self-help center providers, and others who understand the court user's experience. In

combination, the Judicial Council may also conduct focus groups with LEP persons on suggested signage practices to ensure future efforts are better informed and successful.

The Judicial Council should consider the formation of a working group, under the auspices of the standing Translation Advisory Committee, to develop specific recommendations for a signage plan, such as standardized international symbols or icons, recommendations for flexible signage, standards for electronic signage, and a dynamic signage glossary with proposed signage phraseology in plain language and additional languages. This working group could collaborate with courthouse facilities representatives and facilitate focus groups as recommended above to assess viability and appropriateness of proposed signage strategies.

## Summary of Best Practices and Recommendations

- The Judicial Council should thoroughly integrate language access considerations, practices and recommendations, including multilingual signage, into the Facility Standards and update the current 2011 edition.
- Updated Facility Standards should continue to provide for court involvement with the designers and architects early in the process of design, and include signage strategy development as part of the consultation process.
- Multilingual signage must be a component of any wayfinding and design strategies for courthouse construction.
- Signage must be clear, concise, and in plain language. Signage should be simple, accurate, culturally appropriate, and standardized within a court and across courts, when appropriate, to minimize confusion.
- Signage should be in as many languages as appropriate given sign content, placement, criticality, and a court's community's demographics. Courts should follow the [Translation Protocol](#) adopted by the Judicial Council for guidance on how to evaluate and undertake a translation project. In addition, courts should be diligent in the identification of significant language groups in their communities that may necessitate an update in signage translations. The [Document Translation and Language Access Population Tool](#) may be useful for courts in determining the appropriate languages for translation and in estimating translation costs.
- Signage strategies and translation should be undertaken thoughtfully so as to strike the right balance between reliance on architectural features that facilitate wayfinding and complementary multilingual signage that does not overburden a space and cause confusion for court users.
- The Judicial Council should identify signs that are appropriate for statewide applicability and undertake the translation into the state's top eight to ten languages and provide

these translations to courts in a manner that allows individual courts to customize content to fit local needs.

- Whenever possible, courts should explore the use of international symbols or icons for appropriate functions or elements. The Judicial Council should work with courts to identify existing universally recognized symbols or develop court services symbols to implement statewide.
- Electronic docket signs should be expanded to include information on interpreter services and other courtroom-related information.
- Electronic queuing systems should allow for users to select the language in which they want to see the menu of services, and the numbers issued by the system should, whenever possible, connect a court user to a staff member who speaks the court user's primary language.
- Electronic queuing monitors should provide multilingual information to court users while they wait for service.
- The Judicial Council should assist courts in developing performance requirements for electronic queuing systems and other electronic signage to allow for multilingual capabilities.
- Courts should continue to explore use of electronic signage for other communications, in particular when signage needs to remain flexible given a court's services or when information needs to be updated regularly. Courts should remain mindful of the potential implementation and ongoing operational costs associated with electronic signage to ensure the use of electronic signage will be cost-effective.
- The Notice of Availability of Language Access Services should be modified to provide further customizability by local courts. Language Access Representatives should be consulted to inquire as to what modifications and improvements will make the Notice more usable by local courts.
- Whenever possible, focus groups with relevant court staff, security personnel, and court users should be conducted to determine effectiveness or desirability of particular signage strategies.
- The Judicial Council should consider the formation of a working group, under the auspices of the standing Translation Advisory Committee, to develop specific recommendations for a signage plan and facilitate collection of feedback and organization of focus groups to assess proposed signage strategies.

As the California Language Access Plan makes clear through its eight stated goals, language access requires a multi-pronged approach to address all components of court services and their accessibility by Limited English Proficient court users. Wayfinding and signage are critical in that approach as they serve to facilitate access for court users to the court services and functions they require. It is therefore vital that as California courts strive to implement the LAP and expand



language access services, effective wayfinding and signage systems that incorporate multilingual information and accessibility for LEP court users become standard practices in court buildings throughout the state.

## Appendix A: Site Observation Checklist

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Signage and Way Finding Courthouse Site Visits

**Site Visit Observation Checklist**

**Prior to Courthouse Entry**

- ✓ If public transportation stops nearby, look for signage or other indication of courthouse location
- ✓ Are pedestrian paths of travel clear and identifiable from the building exterior to the main entrance of the courthouse?
- ✓ What are the parking options for court users? Free or paid (ticket system or meters?), street parking, court parking lot or structure? Are there multilingual instructions for accessing parking payment systems? Is the path from the parking area to the building(s) clear and identifiable?
- ✓ Is landscaping well-kept and intentionally designed to facilitate entry into the building?
- ✓ Look for signage and/or information outside of building entrance. Look for:
  - Information as to departments (jury, civil, criminal, self-help, etc.) and case types handled at that courthouse
  - Procedure for entering courthouse (security screening, etc.)
  - How is it communicated to court users what items they can bring with them into the courthouse and what items are prohibited?
  - Use of symbols/icons instead of text on signs
  - Any multilingual signage.
    - If so, content, placement, usability, languages included.
- ✓ Look for ease of navigation toward appropriate courthouse entrance
  - Is it intuitive? More than one entry? If so, clear which one is appropriate entrance for what?
- ✓ Are there any exterior contact points for public access, such as after-hours drop boxes or outward facing filing counters? If so, how is signage to and at these contact points different or similar to signage for interior contact points?

**General Questions Regarding Building Wayfinding and Architectural Considerations**

- ✓ What is the impression of the overall legibility of the building wayfinding system?
- ✓ Do public areas of the building allow good visual access into the environment?

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- ✓ Are there well-marked queues or visual architectural features or landmarks near decision points? (e.g., windows, doors, skylights, public art, color, texture, and scale)
- ✓ Any specific visual strategies that enhance orientation? (e.g., stylized door types, door surrounds, and interior glazing)
- ✓ Is there visual access to the outdoors to serve as an orientation guide?
- ✓ Are interior spaces well lit?
- ✓ Is the environment overly uniform or overly complex? (Ideally, uniformity and differentiation work in tandem or “fit” together)
  - Is there variability in the environment, provided by color, décor, texture, patterns?
  - Are walls and interiors monochromatic?
- ✓ Does the courthouse have an easily understood floor layout to assist users in developing a cognitive map of the space?
- ✓ Are sight lines in public corridors restricted or blocked?
- ✓ Are there movement barriers? (e.g., slow elevators, blocked access)
- ✓ Are there too many choice points? (e.g., too many doors)

**General Questions Regarding Building Signage**

- ✓ Is there a coordinated approach to signage throughout the building, or are there differences among floors, departments or functions?
- ✓ Are signs placed in every location where a decision must be made?
- ✓ In general, do signs provide specific information at decision points?
- ✓ Are symbols or iconography used in the signage? Is there a symbol system employed in the courthouse?
- ✓ Are symbols in the same location on every directional sign?
- ✓ Are multilingual handouts and cards provided to support symbol signs? If so, what languages are included?
- ✓ Are signs spaced so that successive signs are completely visible to each other?

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- ✓ Are signs multilingual? If so, what languages are included?
- ✓ Do signs incorporate the use of scannable codes, such as QR codes to provide information to court users?
- ✓ Do signs use high contrast colors?
- ✓ Are signs uniform in terms of color, font style, scale, iconography?
- ✓ Are building directories in the same location on every floor?
- ✓ Are signs generally placed perpendicular to destination entrances (preferable for visibility) or parallel to destination entrances?
- ✓ In general, does signage information appear cluttered or well organized?
- ✓ Does the signage system work well with the architectural wayfinding elements described above in terms of contrast, visibility and color?

**Courthouse Entrance**

- ✓ Information desk or kiosk prior to security screening?
  - If no, is there one immediately after security screening?
  - Electronic (and if so, language capability and ease of use)?
  - Staffed?
  - Bilingual staff? Easily Identifiable?
  - Handouts? Multilingual? If so, what languages are included?
  - Signage? Multilingual? If so, what languages are included?
  - Lines?
  - Ease of use?
  - Notice of availability of language access services?
    - Format?
    - Multilingual? If so, what languages are included?
    - Does the notice provide specific instructions (e.g., room # and /or phone #) on how to obtain language access services?
- ✓ Security screening procedures and information provided
  - Multilingual Signs or Information? What languages?
  - Bilingual security screening staff?
  - Use of symbols or universal icons to facilitate wayfinding?
  - Ease of use?
  - Long lines? If so, is it because of volume or due to difficulties in design or process? Confusing signs stopping court users?

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**Courthouse Lobby**

- ✓ Post-screening signage
  - Ease of wayfinding
    - Are court users naturally directed to next step(s)?
    - Are pedestrian paths of travel clear and identifiable from the main Lobby of the courthouse through major public corridors?
    - Able to quickly understand where to go?
- ✓ Building Directories
  - Are directories strategically located and visible?
  - Are directories placed in the most prominent location possible?
  - Are directories placed in a consistent location on each floor?
  - Are directories appropriately sized? If so are there symbols on directories of legible size?
- ✓ Are building maps posted in the courthouse?
  - Are they on every floor?
  - Do maps provide basic life safety egress and emergency information?
  - Are they posted in an obvious location?
  - Are they legible and diagrammatically simple?
  - Do they indicate, “You are here” on the map? Is there a symbol for “you”?
  - Directional Signage?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Symbols/Icons?
    - Electronic (and dynamic) or static?
  - Informational Signage?
    - If so, what information provided?
    - Language services signage?
    - Useful? User-friendly? Plain language?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Electronic (and dynamic) or static? (e.g. dockets)

**Clerk’s Office**

- ✓ Ease of accessing and navigating clerk’s office – Where to go for what?
  - How is signage used?
  - Use of electronic signage?
  - Use of symbols or universal icons to facilitate wayfinding?
  - Clarity of signage for user? (Consider range of users, e.g. attorneys, SRLs, etc.)
- ✓ Signage throughout office:
  - Notice of availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (universal symbols/icons, handouts, posters, electronic, etc.)

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- Directional?
  - Multilingual? What languages?
  - Format? (universal symbols/icons, handouts, posters, electronic, etc.)
- Informational (other than language services)?
  - Multilingual? What languages?
  - Format? (universal symbols/icons, handouts, posters, electronic, etc.)
- ✓ Filing window signage
  - Clarity of signage for user? (Consider range of users, e.g. attorneys, SRLs, etc.)
  - Notice of Availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Directional?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (universal symbols/icons, handouts, posters, electronic, etc.)
  - Informational (other than language services)?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (universal symbols/icons, handouts, posters, electronic, etc.)
  - Language ID-Cards? (location/use if observed)
- ✓ Telephones available for court users to obtain help? Language access services?
- ✓ Tools at clerk's disposal for use in helping LEP court users?
  - Observations on use

**Cashier Window and Public Records**

- ✓ Ease of access & navigation
  - Clarity of signage for user? (Consider range of users, e.g. attorneys, SRLs, etc.)
  - Use of symbols or universal icons to facilitate wayfinding?
- ✓ Signage throughout office:
  - Notice of availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Directional?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Informational (other than language services)?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
- ✓ "Window" or desk/office signage
  - Notice of availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?

California Language Access Project  
Signage and Way Finding Courthouse Site Visits

- Directional?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Informational (other than language services)?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Language ID-Cards? (location/use if observed)
- ✓ Telephones available for court users to obtain help? Language access services?
- ✓ Bilingual staff available? Easily identifiable?
- ✓ Tools at clerk's disposal for use in helping LEP court users?
- Observations on use

**Jury Office**

- ✓ Signage throughout office:
- Notice of availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Directional?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Informational (other than language services)?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
- ✓ Bilingual staff? Easily identifiable?
- ✓ Telephones available for court users to obtain help? Language access services?
- ✓ Tools clerk's disposal for use in helping LEP court users?
- Observations on use

**Self-Help/ Family Law Facilitator (or other legal help)**

- ✓ Ease of access & navigation
- Signage throughout courthouse indicating SH office location/services
  - Clarity of signage for user? (hours, type of services (and case types for service) available, referrals if closed)
  - Use of symbols or universal icons to facilitate wayfinding?



California Language Access Project  
Signage and Way Finding Courthouse Site Visits

- ✓ Signage throughout office and desk:
  - Availability of language access services?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Directional to services or other departments/offices?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Informational (other than language services)?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Signage re. procedure for obtaining help (e.g. sign up, wait in line, queuing system, etc.)
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Language ID-Cards? (location/use if observed)
- ✓ Bilingual staff? Easily identifiable?
- ✓ Telephones available for court users to obtain help? Language access services?
- ✓ Tools at disposal of SHC staff for use in helping LEP court users? (e.g. computers, I-speak cards, video or telephonic interpreting, multilingual information/handouts)
  - Observations on use

**Courtrooms (sampling of high volume and/or courtrooms with SRLs)**

- ✓ Ease of locating courtrooms
  - Look at naming scheme for courtrooms (e.g. room numbers, department letters or numbers, congruency or logic behind numbering scheme, language accessibility of names?)
  - Signage to find courtrooms (e.g. positioning with respect to elevators, doors, other offices, etc.)
- ✓ Outside courtroom signage
  - Courtroom procedure/rules signage
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Electronic?
  - Calendars with case name/numbers?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Electronic?

California Language Access Project  
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- Availability of language access services?
  - Multilingual? What languages?
  - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
- ✓ Inside courtroom
  - Courtroom procedure/rules signage
    - Multilingual? What languages?
    - Format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
  - Info regarding availability of language access services?
    - Written or verbal only? If written, format? (handouts, posters, icons/symbols, electronic, etc.)
    - Signage?
    - Multilingual? What languages?
  - Mechanisms for communicating with courtroom participants globally:
    - Videos or global announcement re. procedures for case called or other?
    - Multilingual or interpreted? What languages?
  - Tools available to courtroom staff (clerk, bailiff or other security, other?) to communicate with LEP users?
    - Bilingual staff? Easily identifiable?
    - I-speak cards?
    - Referrals to SHC or other
      - Multilingual? What languages?
  - Interpreter availability in courtroom
    - Available by phone by clerk/judge request
    - Available automatically in courtroom
    - Available by video-remote interpreting

## **Interview Questions for Site Visit**

Questions will vary per site visit depending on existing signage and courthouse construction efforts (e.g., a newly developed courthouse may have taken current wayfinding and signage factors into consideration in original design; an older courthouse may have had to work with existing structures/lay-out, etc. to best design effective signage and wayfinding).

1. Do you have a formal signage strategy? If so, how was it developed? Who was involved in the process?
2. What were the main challenges you faced when instituting your signage/wayfinding strategies (either to work within your existing courthouse design, or in designing a new courthouse)?
3. If you use electronic signage, how did you decide where/how to deploy those signs? How would you characterize your overall experience with electronic signage? Are there both benefits and drawbacks to electronic signs or have the results been largely positive? Have electronic signs allowed you to expand language offerings?
4. What are strategies that work well for you and for court users? What are some that don't? Why?
5. Do you have a formal/ongoing process for obtaining feedback from court users on the success of your signage and where there are issues? Do you have a formalized process for translating feedback into changes and action in the future?
6. How did you decide how many and which languages to translate with regard to signage? Who does your translation? How do you update signage, especially if translated? (e.g. when rooms or offices change, or language needs change, etc.)
7. How are changing signage needs identified? How is the new signage need addressed? Is there a committee? A process for designing and implementing the change?
8. Is cost a factor in your decisions regarding signage? If so, please explain.
9. What would you recommend for another court that is looking to: (a) institute a signage strategy within an existing building? (b) design the courthouse and wayfinding strategies for a new building?
10. Have you employed QR codes or similar strategies to provide information to court users who have SmartPhones? If so, what has been the overall experience with these strategies?
11. What is your court not able to do/offer with regard to wayfinding and/or signage that you would like to do? Why are you not able to implement at this time?

## Appendix B: Telephone Interviews

## **Court Signage and Wayfinding - Telephone Interview Questions**

### **Overview Questions**

1. Do you have a formal strategy for signage and wayfinding to facilitate access into and throughout the building? If so, please describe it.
2. What were the main challenges you faced when instituting your signage and wayfinding strategies (either within your existing courthouse design, or in designing a new courthouse)?
3. If you use electronic signage, how did you decide where and how to deploy those signs? How would you characterize your overall experience with electronic signage? Are there both benefits and drawbacks to electronic signs, or have the results been largely positive? Have electronic signs allowed you to expand language offerings?
4. Have you translated any signs? If so, how did you decide how many to translate and which languages to provide as translations? Who does your translation? How do you update translated signage (e.g. when rooms or offices change, or language needs change, etc.)?
5. Is signage the same throughout the building, or are there differences between floors, departments, or functions?
6. Where, if anywhere, in your courthouse is there a notice of available language access services?
7. Are building maps posted in the courthouse? If so, please describe them.
8. Is there directional signage (i.e. signage directing court users to various offices, departments, services, entrances and exits, etc.)? If so, please describe it.
9. Have you employed QR codes or similar strategies to provide information to court users who have smartphones? If so, what has been the overall experience with these strategies?
10. What is your court not able to do or offer with regard to wayfinding and/or signage that you would like to do? Why are you not able to implement these strategies at this time?
11. What would you recommend for another court that is looking to: (a) institute a signage strategy within an existing building; and (b) design the wayfinding strategies for a new building?

California Language Access Project  
Signage and Wayfinding

## **Location-Specific Questions**

### **Prior to Building or Courthouse Entry**

12. Describe any signage and/or information outside of the courthouse entrance.
13. Do you have signs to communicate to court users what items they can bring with them into the courthouse and what items are prohibited? If so, please describe them.

### **Courthouse Entrance and Lobby**

14. Is there an information desk or kiosk prior to, or immediately after, security screening? If so, please describe it.
15. What information is provided regarding security screening procedures?
16. Does the courthouse have building directories in place?

### **Clerk's Office and other Public Offices (e.g. Cashier, Records, and Jury)**

17. How is signage used in the clerk's office and other public offices? Is it informational? Directional? Or both?
18. Is there signage regarding the availability of language access services in this location?
19. Does your court employ the use of electronic signage in this location?
20. Does your court employ the use of symbols or universal icons to facilitate wayfinding?
21. Do you believe the signage is clear for court users? (Consider the range of users, e.g. attorneys, self-represented litigants, etc.)
22. Are there telephones available for court users to obtain help? Are language access services available via telephone?
23. Are bilingual staff available? Are they easily identifiable (e.g. do they wear a button explaining that they are bilingual, or is there a sign specifying that they are bilingual)?

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Signage and Wayfinding

**Self-Help or Family Law Facilitator (or other legal help)**

24. Is there signage to help navigate a court user to the self-help center? If so, please describe it.
25. Does the self-help center include a notice of availability of language access services?
26. Are there telephones available for court users to obtain help? Are language access services available via telephone?
27. Are bilingual staff available? Are they easily identifiable (e.g. do they wear a button explaining that they are bilingual, or is there a sign specifying that they are bilingual)?

**Courtrooms**

28. Describe any signage that would help court users find courtrooms.
29. What kind of signage is used outside courtrooms?
30. What kind of signage is used inside courtrooms?

## Appendix C: Kaiser San Leandro Visit



## Summary of Site Visit to Kaiser Permanente San Leandro October 4, 2016

### Introduction

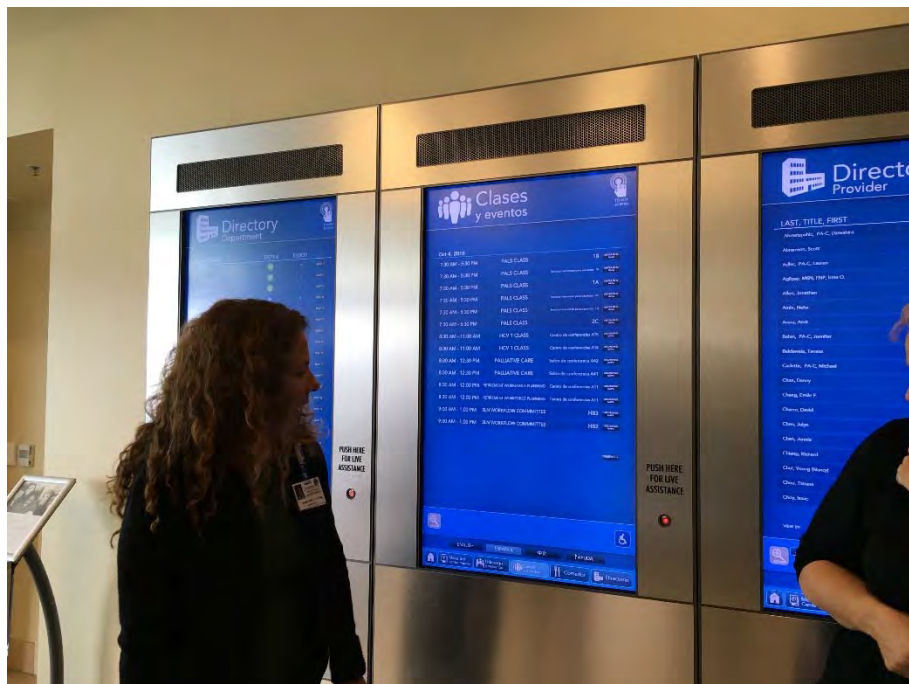
Kaiser San Leandro is a site that combines both a Kaiser Permanente hospital and medical group offices. The facility serves the Greater Southern Alameda Area and boasts 216 patient rooms, 20 intensive care unit beds and a 40-bed emergency room.

We were privileged to receive a tour of the facility from Marianne Teleki and Berta Bejarano. Ms. Teleki is the Linguistic and Multi-Cultural Services Manager for the Greater Southern Alameda Area. Ms. Bejarano is the Manager of Neurology & Director of Diversity, Linguistic & ADA Services for the Permanente Medical Group. Ms. Bejarano was recently appointed as an *ad hoc* member to the Translation, Signage & Tools for Courts Subcommittee of the Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force.

Based on the demographics of the Kaiser members and service area of the medical facility, and the requirements of SB 853 (Ch. 713, Stats 2003), Kaiser San Leandro provides *written* information in English, Spanish and Chinese at minimum. Many health education materials are provided in other languages upon request. In addition, Kaiser endeavors to provide live interpreters, and in the absence of live interpreters, will use technology to provide a remote interpreter, for any language that is needed during a medical visit.

### Signage and Wayfinding Strategies

We began with a demonstration of electronic signage in the West Lobby, which consists of three interactive screens. Clients of Kaiser can access a directory of the building, maps, and other information on this screen in English, Spanish and Chinese.



In addition to the electronic signs, the following features greet all customers coming in through the West Lobby doors:

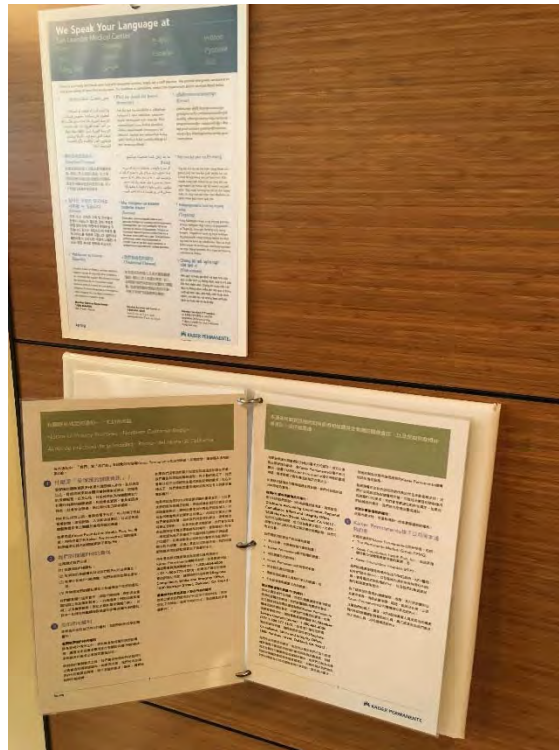
- An information desk, with volunteers wearing distinctive blue coats available to answer questions and direct patients and visitors
- A traditional directory affixed to the wall
- A button on the wall, near the electronic signs, with the message “Push Here for Live Assistance” in English and in Braille



- Multilingual information regarding patient rights posted on the wall. This document, called “We speak your language at San Leandro Medical Center,” is translated into Spanish and Chinese, but also includes Vietnamese, Russian and Farsi, among other languages. It contains information about the availability of interpreter services at the medical facility.



- The second document on this wall, which is laminated and displayed notebook-style, contains information on patient privacy rights. This information is also available in multiple languages.



**Other wayfinding assistance throughout the building:**

- All employees are trained to proactively approach any person who looks lost
- All stations throughout the building have a telephone that can be used to contact a telephone interpreter service if a person who needs assistance does not speak English. Employees are trained on how to access this service when necessary.

**Other multilingual materials available throughout the building:**

- Several of the waiting rooms have a television screen displaying health education content in English, Spanish and Chinese. Kaiser has a process for developing the content in English and obtaining translations that are then loaded into the slides. This information can be changed and updated easily.
- There is a health education center with information displayed on flat-screen monitors in English, Spanish and Chinese. There are also information sheets on a variety of topics that center staff can print in multiple languages upon request.

## **Interpretation Services**

Kaiser San Leandro provides interpreters for all medical encounters in the building. Because patients are also members of Kaiser Permanente, there is an early opportunity to note the need for language assistance in the patient file. Once that information becomes part of the record, there is the ability to be proactive and plan for interpreter needs for each clinic appointment and/or upon hospital admission.

When a live interpreter is not available, Kaiser San Leandro provides remote interpreting services. Depending on the particular setting within the building, a remote interpreter may be broadcast on a flat-screen monitor, or may be connected to the patient through a mobile ipad, as shown below:



The staff member connecting with an interpreter will select the language needed (most common languages have their own buttons on the interface and staff can input less common languages with a keyboard), and the program will first route the request to a Kaiser employee interpreter, who may be located remotely. If an employee interpreter is not available, the request will be routed to an outside vendor for Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) services. If a VRI interpreter is not available, the request will be routed to an audio interpreter. This is the last recourse for an interpreter, and never the first choice option.

There are two major challenges with the VRI service. The first is that a reliable internet connection is critical to ensuring a good experience with remote interpretation. If the connection drops, this obviously impacts the ability to provide clear and uninterrupted communication between and among the parties to the interpretation. Kaiser is currently working on installing a VPN concentrator to improve the reliability of its internet connection throughout its California facilities. The second challenge is identifying a vendor for VRI with sufficient number and variety of interpreters to meet the needs of Kaiser medical facilities.

## Top 5 Takeaways from Kaiser Permanente Site Visit

①

Kaiser has different approaches to meeting language needs at their various sites depending on the demographics of their service areas—**demographics drive needs**, which drive services and determine approaches to service provision. Kaiser conducts a regular Community Health Needs Assessment in its service areas and links to a website where the public can access demographic and public health information about the county and service area on an ongoing basis.

②

Kaiser believes it is less effective and efficient to ask each patient at each encounter whether or not they need an interpreter. There are cultural, social and socioeconomic reasons for which a patient might say that they do not need an interpreter, when in fact they do. Kaiser has made a commitment to **collecting information on language need at the first or earliest possible point of contact** with their members. This information is entered into the patient's file and shows up at all subsequent contacts with Kaiser. This allows Kaiser to plan ahead to meet the need for interpreters in the clinical setting. When there is a language need documented in the patient's file, Kaiser's system requires staff to indicate how language need is met at each appointment or contact.

③

Kaiser in Southern California has developed a **protocol for identifying bilingual employees**, which includes testing and training. There is a special category for employees who provide medical information to patients and therefore require a high level of fluency in the second language and knowledge of medical terminology. Because of the critical and sensitive nature of medical information, Kaiser employees who may be able to “get by” in another language are prohibited from using their second language abilities on the job unless they are certified as bilingual. They must ensure the presence of an interpreter with an LEP patient. In addition, Kaiser volunteers (both mono- and bilingual) are explicitly trained on the limits of their roles and are prohibited from providing medical advice to patients. The purpose of these rules is to: 1) ensure that the highest quality of language assistance is provided to patients; 2) avoid situations in which patients may believe they should not ask for an interpreter when they genuinely need one; and 3) ensure that the roles and responsibilities of bilingual and non-bilingual staff with regard to communication with patients are understood and respected.

## 4

Sometimes the solution is **high-tech**; sometimes it's **low-tech**. Sometimes, the best wayfinding tool is a stripe on the floor that leads you from the lobby to the Emergency Department. Sometimes, the best wayfinding tool is a multilingual interactive map displayed on an electronic touchscreen. A **reliable internet connection** is critical for high-tech solutions, particularly video remote interpreting.

## 5

Kaiser has developed a creative solution that allows them to deliver high quality services to LEP patients: **monolingual clinics**. They will offer appointments on a single day, for example in a pediatric clinic, and will advertise that the clinic day is specifically for those who speak a particular language. On that day, all personnel, from the intake coordinator, to the nurses, medical assistants and phlebotomists will be bilingual and can communicate directly with patients in their language.