

Policy Recommendation

To: Chief Lisa Davis, Austin Police Department

From: Director Gail McCant, Austin Police Oversight

Date: September 17, 2026

Subject: **APO Policy Recommendation: 611 Interpreter Services**

Dear Chief Davis:

This memorandum provides feedback and recommendations to improve the Austin Police Department's (APD) General Order (GO) **611 Interpreter Services**.

The policy analysis and subsequent recommendations examined APD officers' ability to provide interpretation services to individuals in the Austin community who have limited English proficiency, are deaf, or are hard of hearing. The goal is to strengthen APD's policies and practices, so these individuals receive legally required, equitable service. To achieve this, APD must fully utilize available interpreter resources and ensure officers comply with all federal laws and the City of Austin's language access policies to help ensure that affected community members understand their rights during interactions with APD officers.

The APO believes this APD policy can be improved and will benefit the City of Austin, APD, and community members. The APO is committed to improving APD's policies to increase transparency, accountability, and public trust in law enforcement.

Sincerely,

Gail McCant Digitally signed by Gail McCant
Date: 2026.09.21 11:17:28
-05'00'

Gail McCant
Director
Austin Police Oversight

Policy Recommendation

611 Interpreter Services

Recommendation #1:

APO recommends expanding GO 611.2(b)1 to include all languages.

This policy should be amended to state that, for all languages, APD prioritizes certified bilingual officers, when present and available, over third-party interpreter services.

Recommendation #2:

APO recommends clarifying in policy the requirements for officers to be official translators; they must pass the bilingual oral language proficiency exam.

GO 611.2(b) indirectly refers to officers who have passed the bilingual oral language proficiency exam through the city as alternatives to language interpreter services. The requirement for officers to have passed this exam before serving as an interpreter should be explicitly written in this general order.

Recommendation #3:

APO recommends adding a statement of APD's obligations under the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act to align with best practices.

Include a statement that APD must provide language access services under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and that APD must provide accommodations to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Recommendation #4:

APO recommends that the "reasonable period of time" for an interpreter or other service to be made available in GO 611.3.1 be defined.

Defining a specific amount of time that constitutes a "reasonable period of time" will ensure that community members receive an equal quality of service and outcomes.

Recommendation #5:

APO recommends scheduling an interpreter for all interviews and interrogations with deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals.

A set appointment time for interpreter services ensures deaf and hard-of-hearing community members receive appropriate accommodation.

Recommendation #6:

APO recommends that Video Remote Interpreting services be provided and that a policy for their implementation be developed.

Develop a policy for providing Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and use this service when an interpreter cannot be physically present within a reasonable amount of time to be determined and specified in GO 611.3.1.

Policy Recommendation

Recommendation #7:

APO recommends that GO 611.3.6 be amended to reflect the City's requirement for a signed waiver of language access rights.

City of Austin administrative bulletin 22-02¹ requires that individuals in need of language interpreter services who wish to use a family member or friend instead of City provided language interpretation sign a waiver of language access rights.



¹ [City of Austin Administrative Bulletin 22-02: Language Access Policy](#)