



## U.S. Department of Justice

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August 11, 2022

### **Via Email**

Mr. Gregory L. Sattizahn  
State Court Administrator  
South Dakota Unified Judicial System

**Re: DJ # 171-69-7, Language Access / Interpreter Services**

Dear Mr. Sattizahn:

We are pleased to inform you that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section of the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of South Dakota, has determined that the South Dakota Unified Judicial System (UJS) has complied with all items in DOJ's October 4, 2021 letter.<sup>1</sup> That letter resolved a DOJ review under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d to 2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C (together, Title VI). Based on the actions of UJS, and its positive working relationship, DOJ is closing this matter.

Through a series of actions, UJS has demonstrated its commitment to improving access to justice for limited English proficient (LEP) court users in South Dakota. UJS introduced a bill, later signed into law, that expanded access to interpreters and translators at no cost to LEP individuals in all civil cases. In its budget, UJS secured funding to provide the interpreters and translators required by the new law. UJS then worked with the judicial circuits to update their existing language access plans to reflect the requirements of the new state law.

Further, UJS took steps to improve its language access program. In February 2022, UJS issued a statewide language access plan to ensure that all state courts provide interpreter and translator services that are compliant with Title VI and South Dakota law.<sup>2</sup> Other actions by UJS have included the appointment of a language access coordinator, the creation of a language access complaint process, the translation of language access notices for courthouses, and the development of a revised interpreter bench card. UJS has also trained judges and court staff on

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1439231/download>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://uj.s.sd.gov/uploads/pubs/StatewideLanguageAccessPlan.pdf>.

Title VI and state law requirements and related policies and procedures, including how to use the case management system to track and identify interactions with LEP court users. Based on these actions by UJS, DOJ is closing this matter.

Additional Information

This letter relates only to the matter referred to above. It does not address any other issues, complaints, or potential violations, nor does it affect UJS's continuing responsibility to comply with Title VI or other federal laws. Further, this letter does not preclude DOJ from carrying out its duties under Title VI or any other law DOJ is authorized to enforce should a complaint be filed or any other information presented that alleges noncompliance. Lastly, this letter does not affect any rights that any complainants may have to file a private lawsuit in a court of law.

Recipients of federal financial assistance may not intimidate, threaten, coerce, or engage in other discriminatory conduct against anyone who has either acted or participated in an action to secure rights protected by Title VI or the Title VI regulations. The protection against retaliation extends to a recipient's employees who provide information or otherwise cooperate with DOJ's review. Any individual who alleges such harassment or intimidation may file a complaint with DOJ. We would investigate such a complaint if the situation warrants.

This letter is a public document, and DOJ will publish it on its public websites. Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release information, related correspondence, and records shared by recipients and individuals upon request. If we receive such a request, we will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information that, if released, could constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

We have appreciated our positive working relationship with UJS. While we are closing this matter, we remain available to provide technical assistance. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Michael Mulé at [Michael.Mule@usdoj.gov](mailto:Michael.Mule@usdoj.gov), (202) 598-9232.

Sincerely,



Christine Stoneman,  
Chief  
Federal Coordination  
and Compliance Section  
Civil Rights Division



Alison J. Ramsdell  
United States Attorney  
District of South Dakota

cc: South Dakota Attorney General  
National Highway and Safety Administration