



Language Access: A Breastfeeding Equity Issue

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- Objectives: 1. Identify barriers for accessing language and culturally relevant support. 2. List three recommendations to address language needs for underserved communities. 3. Understand the impact of peer support to address language access equity in underserved communities.
- Language access is a breastfeeding equity issue for the diverse clients that breastfeeding supporters and advocates serve in their daily practice. Non-English speaking families are deserving of reaching their individual breastfeeding goals.
- When addressing equity, we must consider the root issues of language access for families. Due to various factors, families may not feel comfortable speaking their own language in order to access support.
- Acknowledging our own bias as providers is also important when working with diverse clients. “Racial Equity: Getting Results” is a tool that looks at how local governments/health departments implement a racial equity lens into their service delivery and policy methods. This helps data collection and program service delivery become equitable in other languages not necessarily English.
- It is important to bring equitable access to non-English speaking communities. Co-creating with the community is the best way to address the barriers and needs they identify within their own community while centering their native language. Incorporate this into your planning, initiatives, service delivery, and program methods.
- 65 million U.S. residents speak a language other than English and this must be seen as a strength for breastfeeding advocates supporting families and how they communicate and deliver services to communities.
- We need to track the availability of lactation support providers that speak another language besides English. Linguistic and culturally relevant information needs to be shared with the community in order to provide quality support for families.
- Consider the quality of the experience for those moving through the health-care system when English is not their native language.
- What language is spoken by lactation providers in cities and rural communities? There is currently a gap in trained lactation support providers that speak another language other than English. Lactation education and training needs to be provided in languages other than English. We cannot provide equitable support in a language other than a person’s first language.
- Babies deserve access to human milk regardless of the language that they speak.
- Leaders in the field need to be intentional and transparent in providing this support and serve as allies within non-English speaking communities.

- Individuals in the community that are bilingual are ideal for providing support. Peer support within communities in languages other than English helps communities to build their own capacity for support.
 - Research shows that peer support in a family's own language that is culturally relevant and accessible increases initiation, duration, and exclusivity rates.
 - People feel most comfortable receiving information in their own language and this includes breastfeeding classes and lactation support. Service delivery is an important equity issue. Consider your clients wants and needs. Just because information or lactation messages are translated does not mean that they are culturally appropriate to the community that is being served. Translation alone does not mean equity.
 - Follow the lead of non-English speaking individuals and advocate for resources and investments in non-English speaking communities.
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