

County of Santa Clara

Office of the County Executive

County Government Center, East Wing
70 West Hedding Street
San Jose, California 95110
(408) 299-5105




Date: February 14, 2020

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Jeffrey V. Smith, M.D., J.D., County Executive

Subject: Language Interpretation Services at SSA

DocuSigned by:

21E905DBD1084D7...

At the Board of Supervisors meeting on November 19, 2019 (Item No. 20), the Board requested Administration provide a follow-up report relating to employment options for language interpreters at the Social Services Agency (SSA).

Language interpretation services are currently provided at SSA primarily through service agreements with individual interpreters, many of whom are stationed on-site on a full or part-time basis at SSA's benefit offices in Mountain View, Gilroy, and on Senter Road in San Jose. These interpreters provide valuable in-person translation services to SSA clients, assisting clients with enrollment, eligibility issues, General Assistance appeals, and other matters.

These service agreements were set to be phased out at the end of calendar year 2019 as a result of the implementation of new countywide language access contracts. However, following direction from the Board on November 5, 2019 (Item No. 11), Administration examined the scope of SSA's translation needs and concluded that continuing the service agreements with individual interpreters was in the County's best interest in the short-term. This review also prompted Administration to explore the feasibility of creating permanent SSA interpreter positions in light of the ongoing, everyday need for these services.

The Employee Services Agency-Human Resources Department (ESA-HR) has conducted a classification study to assess this issue. Based on their analysis, and feedback from the Social Services Agency and the Equal Opportunity Department, ESA-HR is recommending the creation of a new classification and the addition of 12 full-time and 4 half-time positions. SSA concurs with these recommendations. If the relevant bargaining unit also agrees, Administration will bring forward a proposed amendment to the Salary Ordinance for Board of Supervisors review and possible action.

After evaluating this issue closely, Administration, SSA and ESA-HR agree that, over the long-term, to best meet the needs of clients and provide continuity of services, it would be preferable to deliver routine, on-site interpretation services at SSA with permanent County employees. The current interpreters supporting SSA under the service agreement model are highly valued by staff

and clients. Administration is hopeful that many of these individuals would be interested in applying for new County positions, should they be created.

The Board also requested an update regarding possible changes in the rates paid to interpreters under our current SSA service agreements. Based on the classification study that was done, and given the impending recommended changes in this area, Administration believes it is prudent to maintain existing rates at their current level for the time being.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Brian Darrow in my office at 408-299-6958.

cc: Miguel Márquez, Chief Operating Officer
James R. Williams, County Counsel
Megan Doyle, Clerk of the Board
Chief Board Aides
Agenda Review Administrator