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LINGUISTICS AND LAW IN THE SECURITY SPHERE: FOREIGN EXPERIENCE

Between 1990 and 2013, the United States has seen an 80 % growth in the limited-English proficient (LEP) population—reaching 25.1 million in 2013. Linguistic diversity in the U.S. makes language services in law enforcement a critical component in overcoming language barriers that can have a negative impact on public service. Improving communication for limited-English proficient and deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals leads to improved outcomes in public safety and helps local, state and federal law enforcement agencies build stronger relationships and trust with the communities they serve.

Having access to comprehensive language support, including written translation and language interpretation for law enforcement agencies, enhances communication, ensures compliance and increases staff efficiency while helping law enforcement build trust and cultivate a positive public image.

Understanding how language barriers affect law enforcement is key. First, we'll take a look at how ineffective communication with limited-English speakers negatively impacts law enforcement agencies, and then we'll look at the impact of having access to quality language services.

How Ineffective Communication Negatively Impacts Law Enforcement

- 1) Miscommunication errors strain time and limited resources.
- 2) Can result in public scrutiny and loss of public trust.

3) Delays in services and miscommunication errors lead to unnecessary visits and calls that impact the productivity and efficiency of law enforcement and staff.

4) Negatively impacts the reputation of the law enforcement agency within the community and leads to decreased involvement of LEP populations requiring law enforcement services.

5) Can impede the process of providing public safety and emergency response

Providing equal access to language services in law enforcement positively impacts public safety, public health, and helps protect legal rights.

How Comprehensive Language Support Positively Impacts Law Enforcement Agencies:

1) Maximizing resources and cuts down on time and resources spent dealing with miscommunication errors.

2) Achieve and enhance government compliance and regulatory compliance with relevant legislation.

3) Increases the efficiency and productivity of law enforcement agencies.

4) Aids in positive response to disaster preparedness and public safety.

5) Promotes community integration in immigrant, refugee, and LEP communities.

6) Increases staff adoption and reduces staff frustration.

7) Enables law enforcement agencies to build a higher level of trust in the community [1].

The United States Office of Justice Programs formally defines law enforcement professionals as:

«any officer, agent, or employee of a State, unit of local government, or an Indian tribe authorized by law or by a government agency to engage in or supervise the prevention, detection, or investigation of any violation of criminal law, or authorized by law to supervise sentenced criminal offenders».

About 18,000 federal, state, county, and local agencies in the United States each employ between one and 30,000 law enforcement professionals. Most of these employees are sworn officers who are authorized to make arrests and carry a badge and firearm; a smaller number of non-sworn civilian personnel support their efforts. In 2012, the Uniform Crime Reporting Program reported over one million state and local law enforcement employees nationwide, more than 750,000 of whom were sworn officers.

Absolutely all law enforcement roles at the local, state, and federal level are improved when officers have advanced language skills. More specifically, some responsibilities performed daily throughout the sector that require officers to communicate in a language other than English include:

Addressing participants present at an incident in a timely and reassuring fashion to diffuse fear or tension and to restore community morale,

Speaking with witnesses or victims' relatives and taking accurate testimony,

Investigating criminal activity and collaborating with colleagues across departments, and

Educating the public while developing trusting relationships through speaking roles at schools or community special interest groups [2].

Therefore, improving language skills is a very important part of the work of a law enforcement officer, the correct use of which facilitates the process of communication with citizens and increases the level of public trust in law enforcement agencies and other public services.

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THE ONLINE SAFETY BILL ILLEGAL AND HARMFUL CONTENT

The idea of creating a law to tackle some of the worst aspects of internet content is a noble one and long overdue (e.g. terrorist content, bullying, racism and hate speech, child abuse, self-harm, suicide imagery and conspiracy theories that incite violence etc.). At present, far too much of this slips through the cracks of the weak self-regulatory approach, as aptly demonstrated so many times via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. (they were slow to stop ISIS, dangerous conspiracy theories and political leaders inciting violence) [1].

The UK Online Safety Bill was introduced into UK parliament on 17 March 2022. The OSB is a proposed UK law to establish a new regulatory regime to address illegal and harmful content online. Amongst other requirements, the OSB will impose a duty of care in relation to illegal content as well as content that is harmful to both adults and children on providers of internet services which allow users to upload and share user-generated content [3].

The Online Safety Bill imposes obligations on in-scope services regarding three types of content: illegal content, content that is harmful to children, and content that is harmful to adults. It then applies further sub-categorisations within these content types. The «safety duties» that services must comply with vary depending on the content in question [1].