PRESS RELEASE
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NEED FOR TRAINED INTERPRETERS INCREASES IN KERN COUNTY AND STATEWIDE
Spring 2020 Training in Bakersfield, CA Aims to Address Widespread Violation of Language Rights

Bakersfield, CA. Imagine being in the hospital for urgent care, attending a disciplinary hearing at your child's school, or being questioned by police after witnessing a crime—but you can't understand what's being said or communicate what you know.

Situations like this are all too common for the 6.7 million California residents who speak limited or no English. The communication breakdowns that result can have far-reaching impact on community health and safety for all residents.

Under state and federal law, California residents have the right to access government-funded services in their primary language. Yet even where service providers are aware of their legal responsibility to offer interpreting, they can have a hard time finding interpreters. Qualified interpreters trained for legal, educational, or other specialized fields are even more rare.

To increase the number of interpreters trained to assist in legal situations, California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. is organizing interpreter trainings statewide. The next interpreter training is set to take place in Bakersfield in March and April 2020.

Why Bakersfield? Kern County has few to no interpreters for the multiple languages county residents speak. Even the number of trained Spanish interpreters is limited, though Spanish is widely spoken in Kern County and over 126,000 Spanish speakers are not fully proficient in English, according to American Community Survey data.

Demographic changes in Kern County are also intensifying the need for trained interpreters. For example, earlier this month, a spokesman for the Bakersfield Police Department stated in an LA Times article that "he had been unaware there was a Mexican indigenous community in the county." An estimated one in three California farmworkers speaks an Indigenous Mexican language, and many speak little or no Spanish or English. Without interpreter support, especially if police officers or other service providers assume Spanish fluency, community safety and health can be at risk.

CRLA's interpreter training is unique in that it is free of charge for participants. It is also the only training currently offered in California that is fully bilingual, meaning participants can speak either English or Spanish along with one or more of the priority languages identified for the training.

Based on demographic data for Kern County, the priority languages for the Spring 2020 interpreter training are Arabic, Cantonese, Ilocano, Korean, Mandarin, Mixteco / Tu'un Savi, Punjabi, Tagalog, Triqui / Nana-Xnounj, Vietnamese, and Zapoteco.

Interested applicants of all experience levels are invited to apply online by January 13th, 2020. There is no cost to participate in the training for accepted applicants. The application is available in English at www.crla.org/interpret and in Spanish at www.crla.org/interpretar.

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California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA)
Founded in 1966, CRLA's mission is to fight for justice and individual rights alongside the most exploited communities of our society. Through a network of regional offices in 20 California cities and communities, CRLA provides legal services to over 40,000 people through specialized programs focusing on the needs of farm workers, housing, environmental justice, education, individuals with disabilities, immigrant populations, LGBT rights, and women, children and families.

For more information on CRLA, please visit www.crla.org.