

Things to Consider when Designing a Linguistically and Culturally Sensitive Intake System

- Determine what your goals are before you jump in
 - For example if you wish to be just a referral system you will have different considerations than a program set up to do full representation
- Decide if you want to create a formal collaborative or a looser system of referral, you may want to have both. Formal systems have advantages but take a great deal of time
- Look at the needs and open gaps in service in the community when determining your ultimate goals
 - What is most needed? You may want to focus on a couple issues at first (immigration, family law). Though immigrant communities actually require services in more areas of law than clients who are native born and can speak English. Often a client may rely on your services for questions only tangentially related to law because they have no other place to turn, since they cannot access the regular social services due to language and cultural barriers.
- Pre-planning is essential
 - The creation of referral lists that are able to serve your target ethnic community (public and private)
 - Community building and gaining trust before you start taking clients
- Do not assume that volunteers with expertise in law and language will be available. This will depend greatly on your goals. If little training is required (referral only system) then volunteers will be easier to garner.
- Training and Mentorship are key to retention of happy staff/volunteers. Though this statement is true in all workplaces it is especially true among immigrant populations. Your staff will most likely be only a few years removed from the situations of your clients and may need special considerations.
- Think creatively when doing outreach, don't just sit at a booth at a big community event, and instead walk around with the people. Give out something interesting, i.e., we tried lollypops with our name and phone numbers stuck to each candy.
- Providing assistance in language will only get you so far. Immigrant populations are by their very nature less trusting and need to feel tied to those they are seeking help from. If you have advocates who are too Americanized then clients will not divulge their full story, if at all, and assistance will be limited. Need to be culturally sensitive. If an advocate lives within the community in which they serve their ties will be greater.
- Things will take longer than you think
- Set realistic goals, and ask for help