

McKenzie tapped as county's language access coordinator

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Marimer McKenzie has been chosen to serve as New Hanover County's language access coordinator, according to a news release.

McKenzie's appointment comes after the county's participation in the 2023 Language Access Collaborative with UNC Chapel Hill's Institute for the Study of the Americas and development of the county's first language access plan.

McKenzie transitioned to the new role July 1 after serving as an outreach coordinator for the Office of Diversity and Equity since 2021, according to a news release. She was appointed to Gov. Roy Cooper's Advisory Council on Hispanic/Latino Affairs in 2023 and was an integral part of the planning and development of the New Hanover County Hispanic-Latino Commission.

"What we learned as part of our participation in the Language Access Collaborative is there is an ongoing need to connect with individuals in our community who communicate in different ways so they can engage with county services," said Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Linda Thompson in the release.

A New Hanover County survey found that while Spanish and ASL were the most commonly requested for communication, multiple languages were identified, including Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic and others, the release stated.

McKenzie will use the Language Access Plan developed during this program to better assist residents with limited English proficiency, according to the release. This includes consulting with county departments to identify needs and train staff on utilizing existing resources, coordinating translations of key documents and informational materials, organizing interpreter services when necessary, engaging with community partners and helping with outreach efforts in the community to inform the public of language access resources that are available, the release stated.

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