



Department of Consumer & Business Services: Fact sheet on outreach to multicultural, multilingual residents

The Department of Consumer & Business Services (DCBS) is Oregon's largest regulatory agency. The department administers state laws and rules and protects consumers and workers in the areas of workers' compensation, occupational safety and health, financial services, insurance, building codes, and targeted contracting opportunities for small businesses.

DCBS conducts outreach efforts and joins other state, local, and federal agencies and non-profit organizations in events that provide program and service information to Oregon residents who may speak little or no English. Many of these residents have recently arrived from Mexico, Central or South America, Asia, or Russia. DCBS has received questions about whether attendees at these events are legal residents and whether state agencies should participate. The department bases its participation and its outreach program on the following:

- Oregon's changing population includes growing numbers of new residents with limited English skills who may be unfamiliar with their rights and responsibilities as workers and consumers in Oregon. These residents are often especially vulnerable to unsafe work conditions, mistreatment, or fraud. To administer its programs effectively DCBS must reach out to these individuals – many of whom are naturalized citizens or legal residents – just as the department conducts outreach and provides information to English-speaking residents.
- We enforce all applicable laws and rules regarding an individual's eligibility to receive a given service from DCBS. In some cases, this may include a requirement for confirmation of citizenship or legal residency. In many other cases, however, the state laws and rules that DCBS administers do not depend on immigration status. For instance, occupational safety and health rules enforced by Oregon OSHA – a DCBS division – apply to employers doing business in this state regardless of where they are headquartered or the home state or nationality of their workers. The same is true of DCBS' responsibility for enforcement of workers' compensation, consumer protection, and other laws.
- By educating vulnerable residents about their rights and responsibilities as workers and consumers, DCBS helps reduce workplace injury and illness rates, workers' compensation costs, consumer fraud, and inappropriate business practices. This saves money and improves the economic climate for all Oregon residents and businesses.
- DCBS uses many avenues to reach residents who speak Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese and other languages. These include radio, television, newspaper, and Yellow Pages articles and advertisements. The department also attends community events that attract large numbers of limited-English-speaking residents. These events are effective as outreach tools and efficient as a use of DCBS staff time and resources because they allow personal contact with many people who might not normally hear about workplace safety and health, workers' compensation, and consumer protection services.

DCBS' mission is to protect and serve Oregon's consumers and workers while supporting a positive business climate in the state. Participation in these outreach events targeting limited-English populations helps the department advance all elements of that mission.

Reporters or others with questions can contact Lisa Morawski in the DCBS Director's Office for more information, at 503-947-7897.