Hennepin County translation style guide

We strongly encourage the use of clear, concise language in all county communications. In most instances, it's not only easier to understand, it's more accurate. By avoiding jargon and by using concise sentences you make it easier for all residents, regardless of education or literacy, to access essential county services.

For Hennepin County staff
- Break up the text into shorter sentences that are easier to accurately translate.
- Try to avoid department and program names because these can be difficult to translate. Instead, use "Hennepin County," "the county," or "the program."
- Avoid acronyms.
- Spell out months in dates rather than just using numbers (e.g., June 1, 2016).
- When submitting text for translation, include the following to help the translator:
  - Identify your specific audience
  - State what your goal is with the communication (e.g., do you want your audience to do something?)

For the translator
Hennepin County style is clear and direct. The translation should match that voice and be more conversational than formal. We prefer concise, active sentences that are easily understood by a diverse audience. For details, go to www.hennepin.us/writingguide.
- Capitalization – we prefer lowercase style, so in most cases you should continue the capitalization style of the English language version.
- Time – use 12-hour format with "a.m." and "p.m."
- Abbreviations – in general, avoid. Do not abbreviate days of the week or months.
- Numbers – spell out number below 10; use digits for 10 and above.
- Dates – spell out months instead of using digits.
- Locations:
  - Do not translate the names of buildings.
  - Do not translate addresses.
  - Do not translate the names of neighborhoods or cities.
- Brand – for complete details, go to www.hennepin.us/brand.
  - Do not alter colors.
  - Do not translate or reproduce graphic elements, including the county wordmark. This is the typographic logo with just the county name.
  - For fonts, use the following:
    - Sans Serif (headings) – Myriad Pro (preferred) or Arial
    - Serif (main text) – Berkeley (preferred) or Times New Roman

Translating into Spanish

In most cases, Spanish speakers in Hennepin County come from a variety of backgrounds and countries. Because of this, translations should strive to be accessible to a multinational audience.

- Word selection – unless the audience is from a specific group or country, strive to use language that would be understood across country borders.
- Style and tone – avoid literal translations, and do not hesitate to break-up long sentences into smaller parts. Strive to be concise, precise and clear.
- Dates – spell out the month and use a date, month, year order.
- Pronouns – you can use the impersonal form of pronouns as needed.
    - Usted – you do not need to continue the extensive use of English personal pronouns in the translated version. If the sentence does not need "usted" – the way "you" is often needed in English – then you can remove it.