

Court's leaflets to speak Spanish

The administrators are having pamphlets translated to serve the Hispanic population.

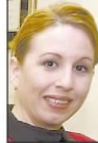
By **SUSAN JACOBSON**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

KISSIMMEE — Attorney Mercedes León has seen the frustration and confusion her Spanish-speaking clients experience when they try to navigate the court system.

"The whole process is already overwhelming as it is," said León, who is bilingual. "There's not enough Hispanic resources. The whole system is geared to be non-Spanish speaking."

Court administrators, recognizing the booming Hispanic population in Osceola, are planning to make things easier for Spanish speakers by translating informational brochures into Spanish. Orange County is doing the same.

The need is even greater in Osceola, however, where nearly 29 percent of the county's 172,493 residents are Hispanic, 2000 Census figures show.



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That's an increase of 294 percent in 10 years. In Kissimmee, nearly 42 percent of residents are Hispanic.

Attorney Luis Dávila said he spends lots of time directing Spanish speakers to county, city or court offices and explaining how things work. Spanish brochures would help, he said.

"We find ourselves taking a lot of time just giving basic information to people," said Dávila, who also is bilingual.

The translation process for documents will be slower in Osceola than in Orange County because officials first must print English brochures about everything from drug court to victim-assistance programs. The printing was delayed while waiting for the new Osceola courthouse to open last May, said Karen Levey, spokeswoman for the 9th Judicial Circuit, which includes Orange and Osceola counties.

"What we're playing now is catch-up," she said. "We are in the process of picking and choosing the brochures we feel are in the highest need."

A coloring book that explains the court process to children and a Teen Court pamphlet will be translated, Levey said. Once the English brochures are printed, Spanish ones will follow, she said. Videos also will be either dubbed or subtitled.

"We are really committed to