



Language Access Services Refresher

October 13, 2025

A low-angle, black and white photograph of classical columns, likely from a courthouse or government building. The columns are tall and fluted, with ornate capitals. The perspective is looking up, making the columns appear to converge towards the top of the frame. The sky is visible in the background between the columns.

Language Access: The Basics



Definitions

- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Individual:** one who speaks a language other than English as his or her primary language and has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.
 - The need for a court interpreter should not be based upon the individual's ability to converse in basic English.
- **LOTS:** Languages Other Than Spanish
- **Interpretation:** Rendering statements spoken in one language into statements spoken in another language.
- **Translation:** Converting a written text from one language into the written text of another language.
- **Language Access Coordinator (LAC):** Court employee who assigns Spanish interpreters for the county/district.





language access

The North Carolina Judicial Branch must provide meaningful language access for limited English proficiency individuals under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations.



The Administration of Justice

The North Carolina Judicial Branch agrees “it is essential to remove remaining barriers that deny LEP individuals meaningful access to the court system and that doing so serves the Judicial Branch’s interest in ensuring accurate communications in proceedings and operations, protecting the integrity of evidence, delivering justice, and promoting public trust and confidence in the judicial system.”

- October 25, 2022, [Memorandum of Agreement](#) with U.S. Department of Justice



Who has the right to an Interpreter?



All Limited English Proficiency individuals who are a:

- Party;
- Victim; or
- Testifying witness

in a case has the right to a court interpreter at no cost.



Providing Language Access for family members

Language access is provided for:

- The parents, legal guardians or custodians of a juvenile who is a party, victim, or testifying witness.
- The legal guardians of an adult who is a party, victim, or testifying witness.



Language access must also be provided for limited English proficiency individuals who call or walk into a courthouse with (non-legal) questions or seeking information.

Members of the Public



Covered Court Proceedings

- **Magistrates:** All civil and criminal proceedings before the magistrate, including marriages.
- **Clerks:** All proceedings before the clerk of superior court, including estates, foreclosures, name changes, and other proceedings.
- **District Court:** All criminal and civil court proceedings.
- **Superior Court:** All criminal and civil court proceedings.



The NCAOC will, “provide a free, timely, and authorized court interpreter for all LEP parties in interest in **all** court proceedings and appropriate language assistance to persons who are LEP in all court operations.”

- October 25, 2022, [Memorandum of Agreement](#) with U.S. Department of Justice



What if an LEP Speaks Some English?

- The language of the courtroom proceeding is far more complex than the linguistic interactions of everyday conversation.
- The level of English proficiency required to **meaningfully** participate in a legal setting requires Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) developed through formal education and years of exposure to the language.



How to Evaluate the Need for an Interpreter

If you doubt an individual's English proficiency, determine their fluency through questions.

- When is your birthday?
 - How old are you?
 - When were you born?
 - What kind of work do you do?
 - Please describe items you see here in the courtroom.
-
- Be aware that the heightened anxiety diminishes a speaker's ability to comprehend and communicate in the second language.
 - Always err on the side of caution and ensure a qualified court interpreter is provided for LEPs in covered court proceedings.



What Does OLAS Do?

The [Office of Language Access Services](#) in the NCAOC helps facilitate equal access to justice for Limited English Proficiency individuals (LEPS) by:

- Developing [Standards for Language Access Services in North Carolina State Courts](#)
- Providing support and guidance for questions or issues involving interpreting and translating services
- Ensuring qualified court interpreters are provided to the courts
- Administering court interpreter training and certification testing provided by the National Center for State Courts
- Arranging court interpreters for proceedings



Language Access: Services



What are Language Access Services?

In-Person Interpreting for Court Proceedings

Staff Court Interpreters in 9 counties:
Alamance, Buncombe, Chatham, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, Orange, and Wake
Contract Court Interpreters

Telephone Interpreting

Use by magistrates for initial appearances, public access, and brief, non-evidentiary matters.

Current Vendor:
Propio

Use by district court for first appearances and brief routine matters
Use for out-of-court communication or court operations

Video Remote Interpreting

Use for any proceeding conducted via Webex.
(Separate audio channels for LEPS is coming)

Translation

Court Forms and vital court documents

Transcription-Translation

Audio/visual evidence for district attorneys, public defenders, or assigned counsel.
Court interpreters are prohibited by their ethics from interpreting audio/visual recordings; all audio/visual recordings must be transcribed and translated *prior to the court proceeding*.



Court Interpreters

- The use of court interpreters provides meaningful language access for limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals in the North Carolina justice system.
- Using a properly training court interpreter ensures full and fair participation and facilitates equal access to justice for limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals.
- Depending on the proceeding, the interpreter may be in-person, by telephone, or by video.



SPOTLIGHT: Team Interpreting

Longer proceedings, or proceedings that are complex in nature, will require more than one interpreter. A team of two interpreters should be scheduled for such proceedings.

A team of interpreters consists of an active interpreter and a support interpreter. The active interpreter interprets the proceeding for all LEP parties and witnesses, while the support interpreter is available to assist the active interpreter with research, vocabulary, equipment or other issues.

The active interpreter and the support interpreter will alternate roles every 20-30 minutes to minimize interpreter fatigue.



SPOTLIGHT: Telephone Interpreting



- All Criminal District Court Proceedings
- Brief Non-Evidentiary Matters in Small Claims Court
- Responding to Public Inquiries.



Available on Juno - Instruction Cards



Telephone Interpreter Instructions for _____ County

- Dial **844-340-2763**.
- You will hear an automated system answer.
- For Spanish press 1, for all other languages press 8.
- If you select 8, the system will ask you to state the language needed.
- The call will then be connected to the interpreter.
- Provide the interpreter with _____ the access code for your office/court.
- The interpreter will then be ready to assist you.



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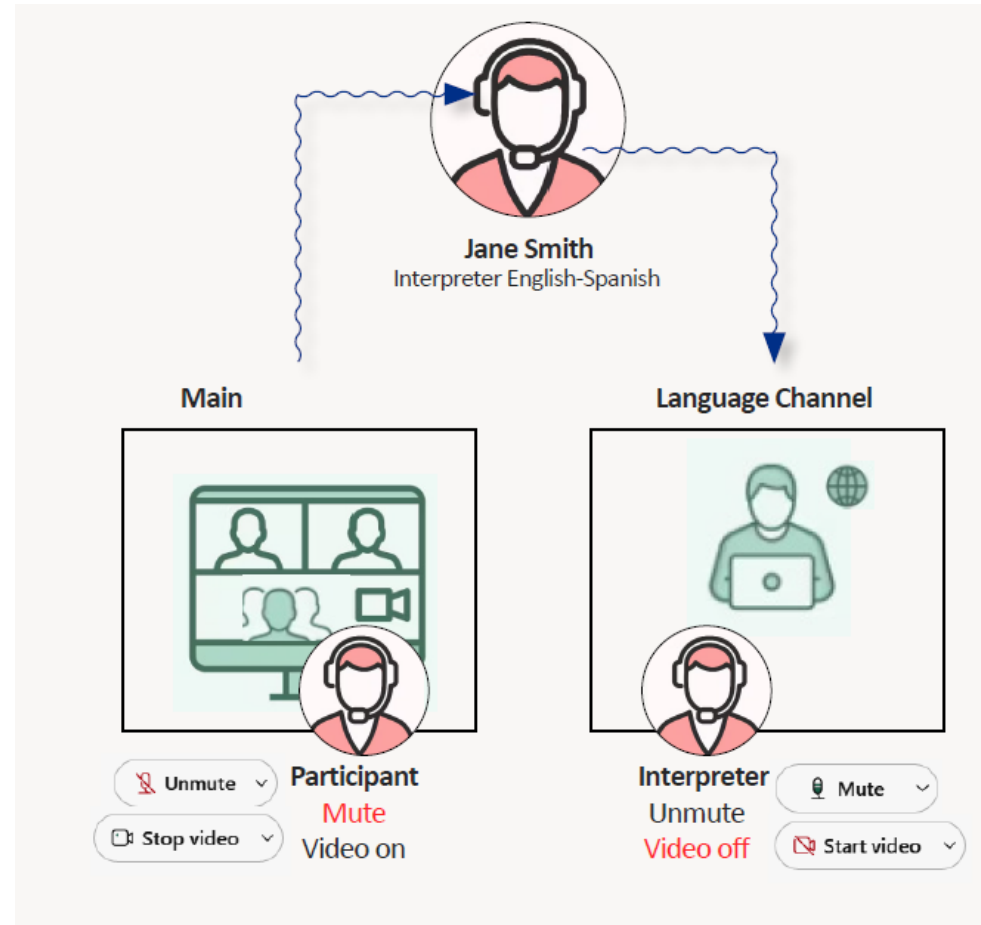


What Am I to Do If I Can't Get a Telephone Interpreter?

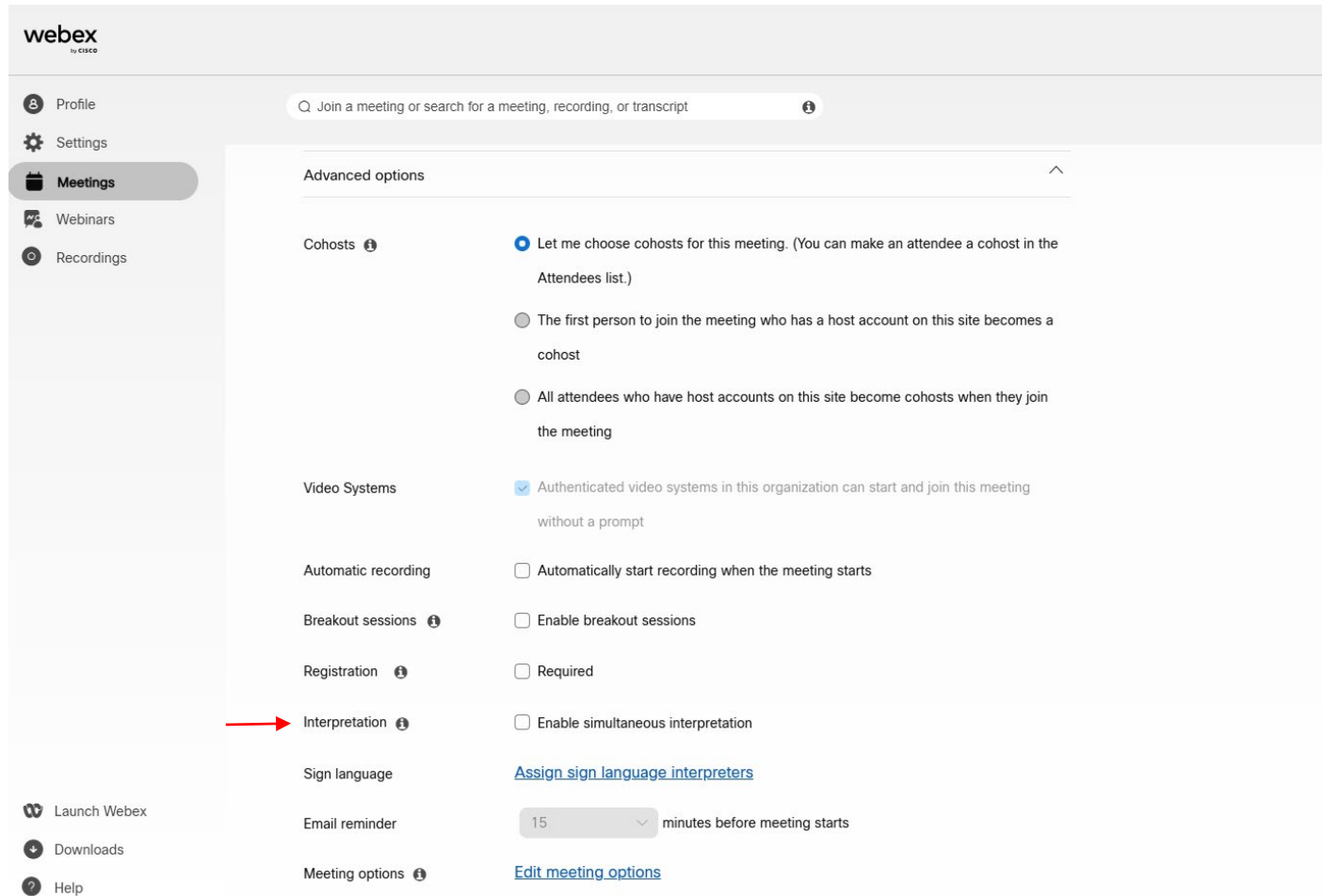
- Defendants have a constitutional right to understand the criminal proceedings against them, implicit in the 5th and 6th amendments, and incorporated against the states through the 14th amendment.
- G.S.15A-511(a)(3) allows for any “defendant brought before a magistrate... is otherwise unable to understand the procedural rights afforded him by the initial appearance, upon order of the magistrate he may be confined or otherwise secured.”



Spotlight: Video Remote Interpreting



Webex Simultaneous Interpreting feature

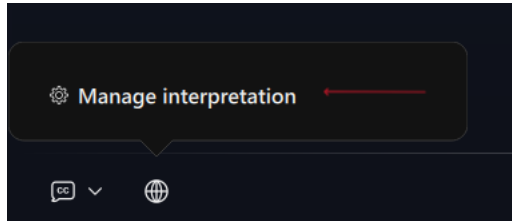


Webex Simultaneous Interpreting feature must be enabled at the time of scheduling.

- www.Webex.com
- Sign in with your nccourts.org email address
- Click on Advanced Options



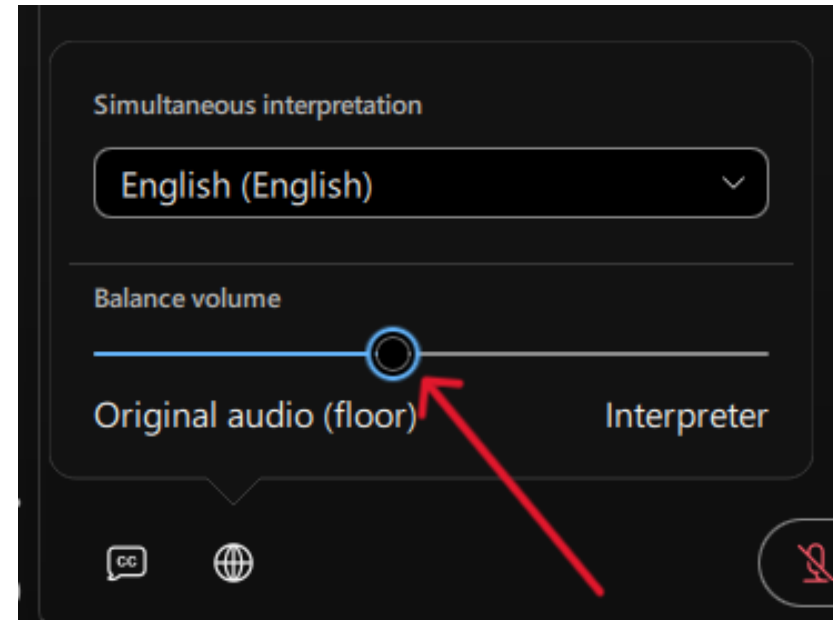
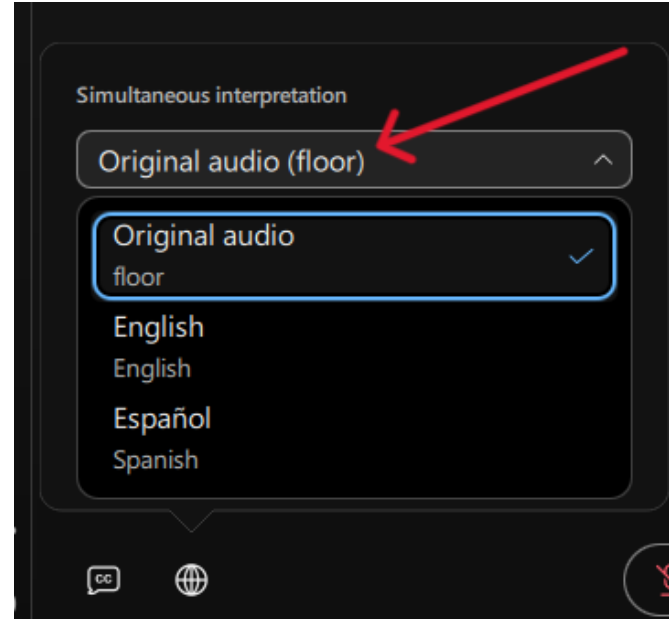
Webex Simultaneous Interpreting Feature



When enabled, participants can select different audio channels.

Screenshots of the Webex SI feature.

LEPs can select the language and the balance volume.



What to Expect When Parties Have Non
English Documents
OR
Non-English Audio Sources

-



Translation Services

In all court proceedings, the parties submitting documents in a language other than English are responsible for obtaining certified translations, at their own expense, except in civil and criminal cases in which the State bears the costs of representation.

District Attorneys Offices, Public Defenders, or Appointed Counsel should contact the Office of Language Access Services to have any written documents in a language other than English translated prior to the proceeding.



Transcription -Translation services

Court interpreters are prohibited by their ethics from trying to interpret audio recordings in court because it is impossible to do so accurately, which would threaten the integrity of the evidence.

The best evidence format for non-English audio is a properly prepared transcription-translation, accompanied by a notarized certificate of accuracy from the lead translator setting forth the lead translator's credentials.

- This work requires an extremely high level of skill.



Transcription

-Translation Example



NCAOC Office of Language Access Services
Forensic Transcription — Non-English to English

File Number:	State v. [REDACTED]
Source File Names:	VTS_01_02.VOB, VTS_01_03.VOB, VTS_01_04.VOB
Description:	Video recording of law enforcement interview of defendant
Date of Recording:	May 29, (2018 according to NCAOC OLAS assignment sheet)
Time Code(s):	Times shown on the wall clock are noted in the T/T (Time codes as provided by NCAOC OLAS: 55 in VTS_01_2 to minute 20 in VTS_01_3 43 in VTS_01_3 to minute 46:10 in VTS_01_03 5 to minute 12 in VTS_01_4)
Transcriber:	Susana Cahill, FCCI
Transcription Proofreader:	Julia C. A. Davis, FCCI
Translator:	Julia C. A. Davis, FCCI
Translation Proofreader:	Susana Cahill, FCCI

Legend in English and Spanish (Clave en inglés y español)	
DET	Detective [REDACTED]
M1	Male 1 - [REDACTED] (Hombre 1 - [REDACTED])
INT	Interpreter (Intérprete)
UM	Unidentified Male (Hombre no identificado)
DSS	[REDACTED] from Department of Social Services Employee [REDACTED] del Departamento de Servicios Sociales)
[U/I], [I/I]	Unintelligible (Ininteligible)
[PH], [F]	Phonetic spelling (Ortografía fonética)
//	Overlapping Voices Begin (Comienzan a traslaparse las voces)
[xxx xxx]	Translator's notes (Anotaciones del traductor)
<i>Italics (Cursiva)</i>	Originally spoken in English (En inglés en la versión original)

Speaker	Transcription (Transcripción)	Translation Span – Eng (Traducción esp – ing)
1	[Esta transcripción se ha elaborado como suplemento de la grabación original. Incluye el diálogo con referencia parcial a otros sonidos y observaciones.]	[This transcription is intended as a supplement to the source recording. It contains the dialogue with only limited reference to any other sounds and observations.]
2	[11:28 - Comienzo del segmento solicitado según el reloj de pared]	[11:28 - Beginning of requested segment according to the wall clock]
3	[Hay un hombre sentado solo en una sala. Se oye abrir una puerta]	[A man is sitting alone in a room. A door opens]
4	DET <i>OK. Alright. I got the, uh, the translator, OK, bud?</i>	<i>OK. Alright. I got the, uh, the translator, OK, bud?</i>

P. 1 of/de 40

State v. [REDACTED]

1/12/2020



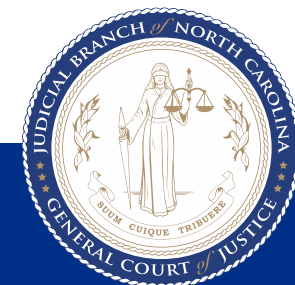
NCAOC Office of Language Access Services
Forensic Transcription — Non-English to English

Speaker	Transcription (Transcripción)	Translation Span – Eng (Traducción esp – ing)
5	M1 <i>Mm-hmm.</i>	<i>Mm-hmm.</i>
6	INT <i>Hola, ¿qué tal?</i>	<i>Hi, how are you?</i>
7	M1 <i>Hola.</i>	<i>Hi.</i>
8	INT <i>Hola.</i>	<i>Hi.</i>
9	DET <i>Alright, this is basically, 'cause I know you speak Spanish --</i>	<i>Alright, this is basically, 'cause I know you speak Spanish --</i>
10	INT <i>Sabemos que habla español.</i>	<i>We know you speak Spanish.</i>
11	M1 <i>Mmjm.</i>	<i>Mm-hmm.</i>
12	DET <i>--uhm... fluently. I know you understand English too. // Uhm --</i>	<i>--uhm... fluently. I know you understand English too. // Uhm --</i>
13	INT <i>Sabemos que entiende un poco el inglés también, ¿verdad?</i>	<i>We know you understand English a little too, right?</i>
14	DET <i>OK, so we're gonna go over again a couple things, OK? [Clears throat]</i>	<i>OK, so we're gonna go over again a couple things, OK? [Clears throat]</i>
15	INT <i>Nuevamente vamos a repasar un par de cosas.</i>	<i>We're gonna go over a couple of things again.</i>
16	DET <i>Alright. You already signed your Miranda rights, right?</i>	<i>Alright. You already signed your Miranda rights, right?</i>
17	INT <i>Usted ya firmó sus derechos.</i>	<i>You already signed your rights.</i>
18	M1 <i>Mmjm.</i>	<i>Mm-hmm.</i>
19	DET <i>OK. Alright, and you want to talk to me about the girl that was touching you. Correct?</i>	<i>OK. Alright, and you want to talk to me about the girl that was touching you. Correct?</i>
20	INT <i>¿Quiere hablar sobre la niña que la estaba -- lo estaba tocando a usted?</i>	<i>Do you want to talk about the girl that you were -- that was touching you?</i>
21	M1 <i>Mmjm.</i>	<i>Mm-hmm.</i>
22	DET <i>OK. Alright. I want you to, uhm... so you want, uhm -- let's just go over this real quick. And we're gonn-- I'm gonna say this in --</i>	<i>OK. Alright. I want you to, uhm... so you want, uhm -- let's just go over this real quick. And we're gonn-- I'm gonna say this in --</i>
23	INT <i>Vamos a revisar esto rápido. [Señala unos papeles sobre la mesa]</i>	<i>We're going to review this quickly. [Points to some papers on the table]</i>

P. 2 of/de 40

State v. [REDACTED]

1/12/2020



Certificate of Accuracy Example



Assignment of Translator or Agency
NCAOC Office of Language Access Services

Certificate of Accuracy

STATE OF South Carolina
COUNTY OF Florence

I, Julia Davis, the undersigned, being duly sworn, depose and say the following:

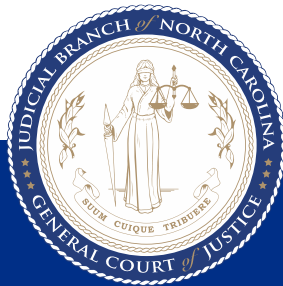
I have transcribed the Video in the matter of State v. [REDACTED], file number [REDACTED]
from English to English and Spanish to Spanish, and translated the Spanish contained in the transcription from Spanish to English, and I hereby certify that the transcription - translation is a true, complete, and accurate transcription - translation to the best of my knowledge and ability, and that I am qualified to render such a transcription - translation. I certify that I am either:

☒ federally certified by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AOUSC) as a court interpreter;
☐ certified by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts as a court interpreter; and / or
☐ certified by the American Translators Association in the requested language pair; and / or
☐

Julia Davis
Signature of qualified translator

Sworn to before me this 14 day of January, 2020.

Heather Cicciulli [NOTARIAL SEAL]
Official Signature of Notary Public
Heather Cicciulli, Notary Public
Notary's printed or typed name
My commission expires: 3-10-2024



A Note on Translated Court Forms

Forms | North Carolina Judicial Branch

nccourts.gov/documents/forms

NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Search...

CourtsHelp TopicsServicesFormsCourt DatesContact

Going to Court

COVID-19

Find COVID-19 orders, updates, and FAQs.

Read more

HomeDocumentsForms

Forms

Search statewide judicial forms. Narrow your search by entering a keyword, General Statute, form number, form title, etc.

Filters

You can use the filters to show only results that match your interests.

Contains

search keywords...

Form Number

search form numbers...

General Statute

search general statutes...

Subject

- Any -

Language

☒ - Any -

☐ English

☐ Español

☐ Tiếng Việt

Looking for local rules and forms? [Find them by county](#) or [search all local forms](#).

eCourts Guide & File NOW AVAILABLE to help users prepare court documents to file for certain case types. [Learn more](#) or [start a filing](#).

1,038 Forms

ADC-CR-314

Criminal Forms (CR)

POPULAR

[Criminal Record Search](#)

ADC-CV-100

Civil Forms (CV)

POPULAR

[Civil Summons](#)

— Multiple languages available

ADC-E-506; CONTINUATION PAGES

Estate (E)

POPULAR

[Account](#)

Select Spanish or Vietnamese

29

A low-angle, black and white photograph of several classical columns, likely from a courthouse or government building. The columns are white and fluted, with ornate capitals. The perspective is looking up, making the columns appear to converge towards the top of the frame. The sky is visible in the background between the columns.

Language Access:

The Role of the
Interpreter



The Role of the Court Interpreter

To provide equal access to justice and court proceedings by linguistically placing the LEP individual on equal footing as an English speaker.

- Equal access does not mean better access.



What is the Court Interpreter's Job?

- To render everything said in court from the source language into the target language
 - Accurately without distorting the meaning
 - Without omissions
 - Without additions
 - Without changes to style of speech (registry)
 - With as little delay or interference as possible
 - While speaking and listening for the next chunk of language
 - Monitoring their own output



Three Modes of Court Interpreting



- **Simultaneous**- Appropriate form of interpreting for most court situations. The interpreter listens in the source language while simultaneously interpreting into the target language.
- **Consecutive**- Appropriate form of interpreting for question and answering situations, such as if there is an LEP on the witness stand.
- **Sight Translation**- Appropriate for short documents where the interpreter reads the document in the source language while interpreting out loud in the target language.



Trained Court Interpreters

- Attend Orientation
- Pass English Written Exam (an NCSC exam)
- Pass a Translation Test
- Attend a Skill-Building Workshop
- Pass North Carolina Court Interpreter Certification Exam* (an NCSC exam)
- Provide 4 Letters of Recommendation
- Pass a background check

*exam is only available in 16 languages.
Interpreters are encouraged to pass an OPI for languages where the NCCICE is not available.

UNQUALIFIED INTERPRETERS



Using Individuals to Interpret

Magistrates, judges, attorneys, bailiffs, family members, or friends cannot be used to interpret court proceedings in place of a court interpreter.

Only authorized court interpreters can interpret court proceedings. An authorized court interpreter is a certified, conditionally qualified, or minimally qualified court interpreter approved by OLAS to work as a staff court interpreter or an independent contract interpreter and listed on a court interpreter registry maintained by OLAS.



But I'm Bilingual...

- Under the North Carolina Constitution, magistrates are a judicial officer.
- You cannot occupy the role of a judicial officer and a neutral third-party court interpreter at the same time.
- You should not act as the interpreter or allow others to act as the interpreter during proceedings due to the liability you could incur.
 - Even if it's just the LEP and you.



Properly Trained Court Interpreter VS. Bilingual Person

Do not allow bilingual law enforcement officers or other untrained bilingual individuals (including court personnel) to serve as interpreters for LEPS.

Why?

1. Avoid any appearance of bias or conflict of interest
2. Ensure the use of qualified, skilled interpreters
3. Ensure full and fair participation



Court Interpreter Ethics

Court Interpreters must abide by the Code of Professional Responsibility for Court Interpreter.

- Canon 1: Accuracy and Completeness
- Canon 2: Representation of Qualifications
- Canon 3: Impartiality and Avoidance of Conflict of Interest or Appearance of Conflict of Interest
- Canon 4: Professional Demeanor
- Canon 5: Confidentiality
- Canon 6: Restriction of Public Comment
- Canon 7: Scope of Practice
- Canon 8: Assessing and Reporting Impediments to Performance
- Canon 9: Duty to Report Ethical Violations
- Canon 10: Professional Development



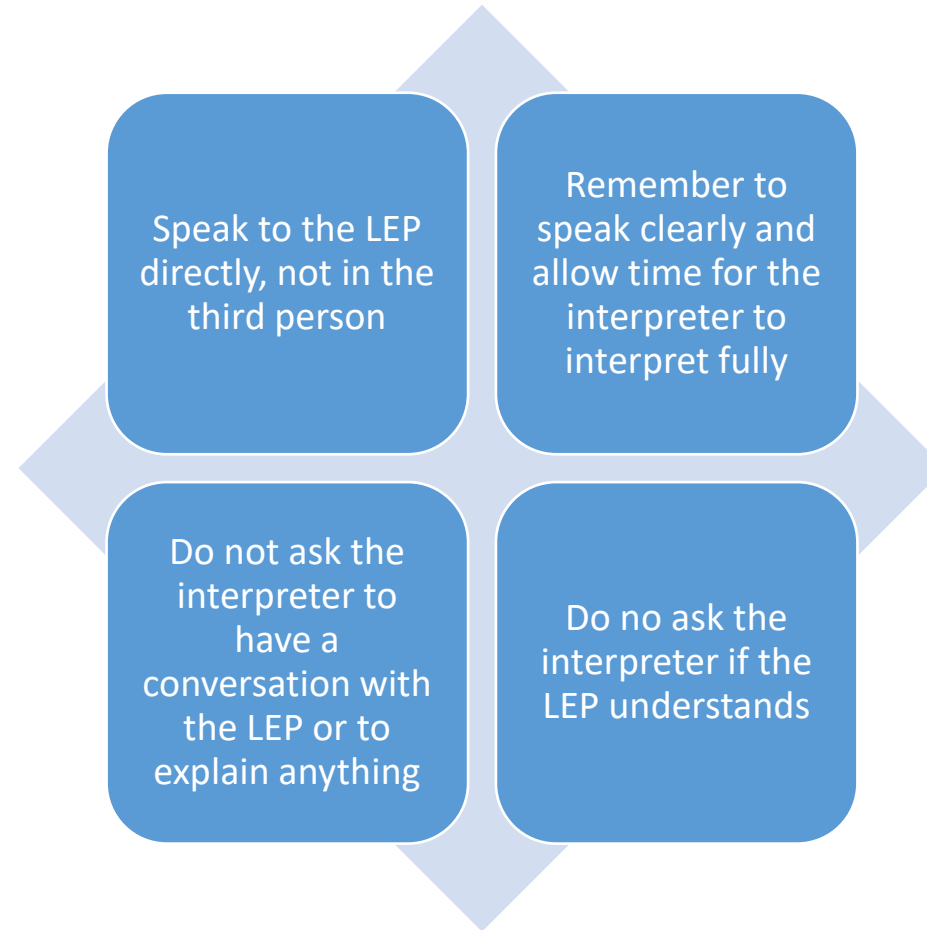


The interpreter ethically cannot

- Explain anything
- Fill out forms
- Advocate
- Ensure the limited English proficiency individual “understands”



When Using an Interpreter...



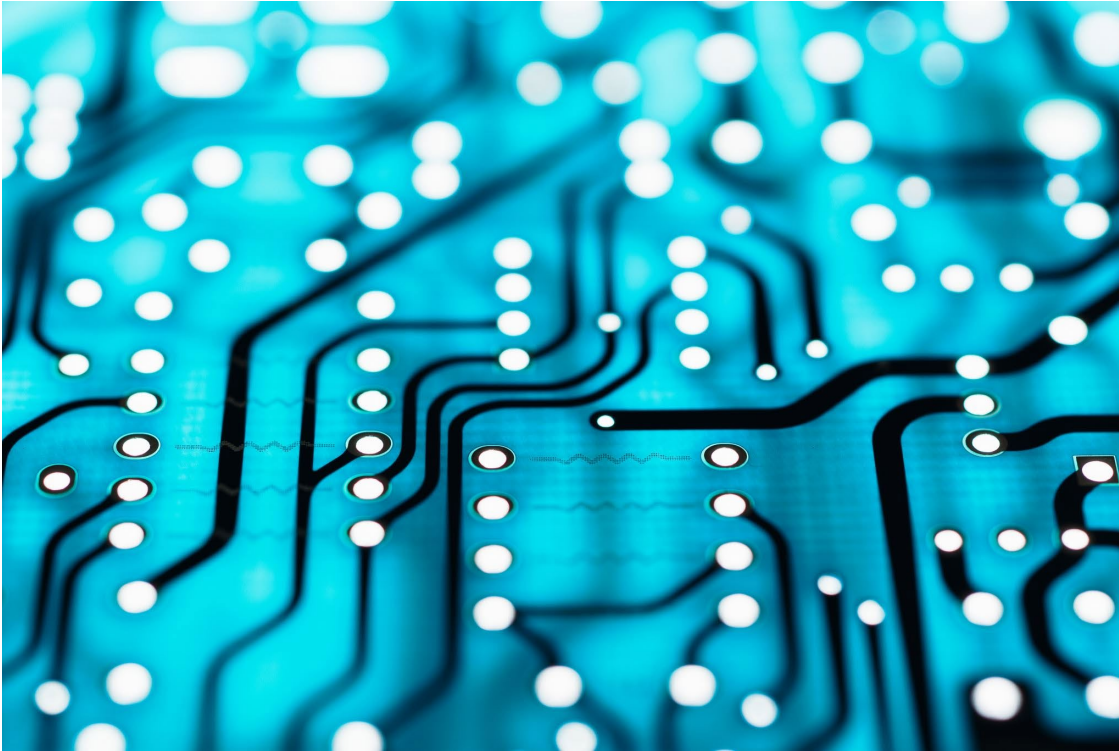
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Language Access:

Case Management
System Indicators



Interpreters & Case Management Systems



- Used in Enterprise Justice (FKA Odyssey)
- Should be used to indicate when:
 - Spoken Language Interpreter Needed
 - Spoken Language Interpreter Used



Interpreter Needed Data

- Use the “I Speak...” cards to assist you in identifying the language needed
- Indicate the language needed and corresponding 3-digit code (see next slide) in the system
- The language information **will appear on calendars** generated from the automated system
- If you are not able to update the interpreter language needed indicator, or if the system is down, please complete the Interpreter Indicator Request Form to request that the clerk update the interpreter information in the appropriate system



Language Access Codes

Spanish	spa
Vietnamese	vie
Russian	rus
French	fra
Mandarin (Chinese)	cmn
Arabic	arb
Portuguese	por
Korean	kor
Hmong	hnj
Burmese	mya
Amharic	amh
Bosnian	bos
Bu Nong (Montagnard)	cmo
Cantonese (Chinese)	yue
Chatino	cly
Chuukese	chk
Czech	ces

Farsi (Persian)	pes
Gujarati	guj
Haitian Creole	hat
Hakka (Chinese)	hak
Hausa	hau
Hindi	hin
Hindko	hnd
Igbo (Ibo)	ibo
Indonesian	ind
Japanese	jpn
Jarai (Montagnard)	jra
Karen (Karen Languages)	kar
Khmer (Cambodian)	khm
Krahn	kqo
Kru (Kru Languages)	klu
Lao	lao
Marshallese	mah

Mnong (Montagnard)	mng
Nepali	nep
Pashto (Pushto)	pbt
Polish	pol
Punjabi (Panjabi, Punjabi)	pan
Rhade (Montagnard)	rad
Serbian	srp
Swahili	swh
Tagalog	tgl
Thai	tha
Tigrinya	tir
Urdu	urd
American Sign Language	ase
Undetermined	und
Other	999



Interpreter Used Data

- Indicates that an interpreter was used in any court proceeding for an LEP individual in a case at some time
- Interpreter Used- Yes (Y) or No (N or blank field)
- This applies to live, remote (Webex), and telephone interpreting
- If you are not able to update the interpreter used indicator, or if the system is down, please complete the Interpreter Indicator Request Form to request that the clerk update the interpreter information in the appropriate system



When to Use Indicators

Event	Indicator	May I change the indicator after the initial entry?
An interpreter will be needed for a limited English proficient (LEP) individual in a case	YES – Indicate the language needed	NO – unless it was entered in the system incorrectly
An interpreter was used in any court proceeding for an LEP individual in a case at some time	YES – Interpreter used	NO – unless it was entered in the system incorrectly



Global Party Record

- eCourts Rules of Recordkeeping Rule 1.20: When a Magistrate or Clerk's Office is informed that a party in interest in a case (e.g., party, witness, or victim) requires an interpreter, the requirement shall be documented in the relevant party's global party record.
- The purpose so an "Interpreter Required Report" can be run to assist with the scheduling of interpreters.
- Magistrates can update the GPR when issuing new processes in eWarrants. If they are unable to update the GBR at that time, then the magistrate should direct the information to the clerk to update the GPR.
 - If a clerk need to initiate an update to the GPR, they should submit an Ivanti request or call the help desk.





Language Access: Request Process





Request Process



Spanish Court
Interpreters

LOTS (Languages
Other Than
Spanish) Court
Interpreters

Request for Spoken Foreign Language Court
Interpreter Form must be submitted 10
business days in advance or as soon as case is
placed on the calendar, whichever is earlier.



Who Schedules What?

- **LACs schedule Spanish court interpreters** upon receipt and evaluation of a completed Request for Spoken Foreign Language Court Interpreter form.
- **OLAS staff schedules language other than Spanish (LOTS) interpreters.** Many LOTS interpreters must be flown in from out of state, so advance notice is necessary, as is certainty of a trial date.

*ALL court interpreters MUST be scheduled by the LAC or OLAS
in order TO BE PAID for services rendered in AOC covered matters.*



Interpreter Requests for Self

-Represented Litigants

- Court personnel must assist self-represented litigants who need a court interpreter for a scheduled court proceeding. Self-represented litigants or persons assisting them can notify a judicial official or a clerk, who will submit the interpreter request on their behalf.
 - For both criminal AND civil cases.
- Court personnel, including clerks, TCAs, TCCs, JAs, and others, who prepare civil calendars must submit the interpreter request.
- Requests should be submitted electronically from the OLAS website at <https://www.nccourts.gov/request-for-spoken-foreign-language-court-interpreter>.



Scheduling Considerations

- Interpreters are reserved for:
 - Two hours for a single case
 - Three hours for a single morning or single afternoon session
 - All-day
- Frequently, interpreters are blamed as the reason for continuances when they've been waiting in court for a case to be called.
- Interpreter cases should be called quickly so they can be released for other courtrooms.
- The interpreter request form is important so that interpreters can be effectively scheduled.





Language Access: Out of Court



Out of Court Communication

Judicial Branch funds are provided for interpreting services for out-of-court communications on behalf of the district attorney, Guardian ad Litem Program, public defenders, assigned counsel, and guardians ad litem representing indigent parties for IDS.

Staff court interpreters are prohibited from providing services out of court.

Language access services required for all out-of-court communications involving private counsel, including all interviews, investigations, and other aspects of general case preparation, are NOT provided or funded by the Judicial Branch.



NCAOC does not provide interpreters at state expense for other state agencies, such as probation and parole functions.

Just as the North Carolina Judicial Branch provides interpreters for court proceedings, other state agencies have Title VI responsibilities to provide language access for limited English proficiency individuals.

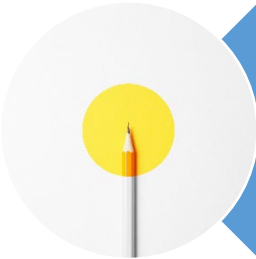
Other State Agencies



Final Thoughts



Language access services ensure *full and fair* participation and provides equal access to justice for LEP individuals



Language access services help get you the information you need to make decisions



Magistrates are the gateway to our justice system and can have a profound impact on efficiency and access





Thank You

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