

How to Get Stuff Done!

Successfully Establishing a High-Functioning VRI TEAM



New Jersey Courts:

- Unified Court System, 21 counties (15 vicinages), 30+% (2.5+ million) speak other languages, 85% Spanish
- Strong language services structure per the [Language Access Plan, Administrative Directive #01-17](#)
- Prior to pandemic, NO use of spoken language VRI, LIMITED use of sign language VRI with ASL staff only

How did the group come into being?

- Language Access Section Initiated (me)

Who was your team made up of and what were their roles & added perspectives?



4 Spanish staff interpreters (1 central office, 3 vicinage staff), 2 ASL staff interpreters, and me.

How did this make-up of team members with different roles help or hinder efforts?

- A team of court interpreters with PASSION FOR TECHNOLOGY was ESSENTIAL.
- After the VRI team THOROUGHLY TESTED, involved Central Office IT & Appellate IT for final VRI testing, which included a judge, formerly an engineer.
- External partners not involved but internal guidance issued for leadership to coordinate with jail staff on VRI readiness, especially for deaf defendants. See [IT Procedure for Sign Language Video Remote Interpreting \(VRI\) in Zoom](#)

How did the team operate?

- Fully remote. DAILY 30-minute meetings before starting work and more.
- I determined priorities and deliverables but ALWAYS in agreement with the team.
- The VRI team started informally but I ultimately sought approval for the team and many deliverables; ex. VRI trainings, videos, guidelines, and resources.

Success: What are 3 accomplishments / deliverables / change in perspectives?

- Spoken language VRI and Sign language VRI with a CDI, HERE TO STAY!
- Created multiple spoken language VRI methods and resources, internal and public:
 - A new [VRI Resources webpage](#) with spoken & sign language VRI Tips, videos, & tech information.
- Established a “permanent connection” with IT via quarterly meetings to continuously discuss/update VRI.
- Recently issued internal memo to vicinage leadership with “Guidance for the Ongoing Use of VRI”.
- Completed other projects:
 - Updated the interpreter scheduling system’s HIRED FOR options to include VRI,
 - Updated the annual [freelancer contract](#) to address VRI service,
 - Expanded the publicly posted [Registry of Interpreting Resources](#) to include “RI – only” interpreters.
- Future plans:
 - Help vicinages build routine hands-on VRI training,
 - Update the interpreter scheduling system again to track staff work accurately, not just as “on-site”,
 - Modernize remote interpreting standards and guidance.

Was it a successful team model?



ABSOLUTELY! The greatest challenge was the massive amount of work.

- DAILY COMMUNICATION & COORDINATION, HARD WORK, & DEDICATION. **TEAM WAS GREAT!**
- No others were “officially” needed for the team, but other staff interpreters helped the team.
- Will continue using the VRI team informally, unless a need arises again for a significant amount of their time.