



TEXAS COURT REMOTE INTERPRETER SERVICE

Working with OCA Spanish Interpreters: A Bench Card for Judges

Overview of Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service

The Office of Court Administration's (OCA) Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service (TCRIS) provides:

- **free** Spanish language interpretation services by licensed court interpreters
- in all case types (criminal, civil, family law, juvenile, probate, etc.)
- by telephone or videoconferencing
- for short, non-evidentiary hearings that typically last 30 minutes or less*
- by advanced scheduling or on demand, as available
- in Texas district and county-level courts and, as time and resources permit, justice and municipal courts

***Note:** Interpretation services, however, can be reserved in blocks as large as two hours, to account for the slower pace of hearings with consecutive interpretation, possible delays in the time a hearing starts, and other extenuating circumstances.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- Landline speakerphone (minimum);
- High-speed Internet and webcam; or
- Dedicated videoconference system (preferred)

HOURS OF SERVICE:

Monday through Friday
except state holidays
8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

To enroll in the service (before the first appointment is scheduled):

1. Log on to: www.txcourts.gov/tcris and complete the enrollment form under "How to Enroll for Interpreter Services".
2. Submit the information requested to enroll the court.
3. An OCA interpreter will schedule a test call or videoconferencing session.

To schedule an interpreter:

1. Log on to: www.txcourts.gov/tcris and click "Schedule an Interpreter" (or contact OCA).
2. Submit the information requested about the proceeding.
3. An OCA interpreter will respond by the next business day to confirm the appointment with connection details.
4. If a court will consecutively hear more than one short proceeding requiring an interpreter, the court must schedule a separate appointment for each (up to a maximum total of 2 hours for all hearings).

A few minutes before the scheduled appointment:

1. Call the phone number provided in your appointment confirmation email (or for videoconference systems, follow the connection instructions in the confirmation email.)
2. Identify the court to the interpreter and provide the requested information.

Procedures for successful use:

1. Prior to the hearing, any document that a participant or the court anticipates using should be sent to the interpreter by email or fax. However, the interpreter is **NOT** permitted to perform sight translation of documents or interpretation of audio or video recordings.
2. At the beginning of the hearing, make sure that all parties are close enough to a microphone (and for video conference calls, make sure that the Spanish speaker is close to the video camera and screen) to be clearly heard by the interpreter. The judge should confirm that: (1) all participants can hear each other; and (2) the interpreter and Spanish speaker understand each other.
3. When the hearing convenes, the judge should ask for and resolve any challenges to the interpreter’s qualifications or appearance via telecommunication. OCA staff interpreters’ qualifications are available online at www.txcourts.gov/tcris.

In criminal cases, the judge should ask the defendant if the defendant objects to the interpreter’s oath and appearance being made via phone/videoconference. If the defendant does not object, the judge should ensure that this is reflected in the record.

4. The judge should administer the interpreter’s oath. (See sample oath at right.)
5. If any participants are unfamiliar with the use of a remote interpreter, the judge should instruct them. (See sample instructions at right.)
6. The judge should ensure that: (1) all speakers pause at reasonable intervals (about every two sentences/10 seconds); and (2) the Spanish speaker pauses for interpretation, even if that person understands or speaks some English.

For additional assistance, please contact:
 Office of Court Administration
 Texas Court Remote Interpreter Service (TCRIS)
 P O Box 12066, Austin, Texas 78711-2066
 Phone: (512) 463-5656; Fax: (512) 666-3633
 Email: interpreter@txcourts.gov

Sample interpreter’s oath:
 “Do you solemnly swear that you will well and truly and to the best of your ability discharge the duties of interpreter and translate from English into Spanish, and from Spanish into English, such questions and answers as shall be put to the witness and received from the witness in the case now pending before the Court?”

Sample instructions for the judge to give to all participants:
 “We will be using a Spanish interpreter today who is at a remote site. The interpreter will communicate with [name of Spanish-speaking participant]. It is important to speak clearly and at a moderate speed so that our voices will be heard through the microphone located [place]. The interpretation will be consecutive so the speaker must pause every 10 seconds or so. If we speak too fast or for too long, the interpreter will have to ask for repetitions to make sure [he/she] conveys the exact same information in the other language. Please direct all questions and statements to the Spanish-speaker rather than to the interpreter. For example, phrase the question as ‘What is your marital status?’ rather than as ‘Ask her what her marital status is.’ The interpreter will then speak from the perspective of the person for whom [he/she] is interpreting.”