

Recommendations for In-Person Court Interpretation



A Pandemic Resource from NCSC

Language Access Services Section | June 2020 | Version 1

To assist state courts with in-person court interpreters for limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic, NCSC's Language Access Services Section staff, along with state court language access program managers from various jurisdictions, have developed the following recommendations.¹ As a general rule, all courts should take precautions to protect the public and employees in accordance with local and state orders and [Centers for Disease Control](#) guidelines.

Planning Ahead



- Court staff should provide interpreters with current information on specific COVID-19 policies and requirements in the courthouse. Examples include mandatory temperature checks, mandatory or suggested use of personal masks or gloves, and, if applicable, the need for interpreters to provide their own wireless interpreting equipment. Such information should be provided well in advance of an interpreter assignment.



- Court Interpreters should be required to check in with court staff before an assignment. Interpreters who have been exposed to COVID-19 or are experiencing signs of illness should be required to contact court staff as soon as possible so that appropriate scheduling adjustments can be made.
- Court staff should advise interpreters to arrive early, as extra time may be needed for entering the courthouse, using elevators, and observing other physical distancing requirements.

On the Day of



- To the extent possible, courts should provide interpreters with wireless equipment to ensure physical distancing from LEP individuals. Courts not providing full wireless headsets should provide disposable headset covers and/or on-site disinfecting wipes for interpreters to use with their own equipment. If the use of wireless equipment is not an option, interpreters should maintain physical distancing from LEP individuals.

¹ Information pertaining to video remote interpretation (VRI) and the use of interpreters for remote interpreting will be covered in a separate document.



- All interpreting equipment, including wireless equipment, telephones, and computer workstations, should be disinfected before and after every use. Courts should maintain a disinfection log next to all equipment to monitor disinfecting practices.

- Disinfection of any equipment to be used by an LEP individual (such as receiver headphones) should be completed in front of the LEP individual if possible. Courts may choose to designate certain staff to perform disinfecting. Alternatively, courts may consider purchase and use of disposable headphone covers for interpreting equipment to be used by LEP individuals as an extra precaution.



- Courts should consider providing disposable gloves to staff and court interpreters handling equipment. Gloves should be disposed of following the distribution of equipment.
- Courts should consider providing American Sign Language interpreters with face masks that include transparent windows or full clear face shields to ensure visible facial expressions and allow for the possibility of lip reading.

If we can be of assistance or if you need any further information about language access or related issues, please contact Tina Vagenas at kvagenas@ncsc.org or Jacquie Ring at jring@ncsc.org.