



THE SUPREME COURT *of* OHIO

65 South Front Street Columbus, Ohio 43215-3431

BECOMING A CREDENTIALLED COURT INTERPRETER

The Work of Court Interpreters

Court interpreters are instrumental in helping the court system carry out its mission of due process, equal protection and access to justice. Court interpreters play a key role in helping the courts and legal professionals communicate with individuals who are limited English proficient, Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Interpreters are key contributors in the aims of justice.

Obtaining court interpreter credentialing shows the interpreter is a skilled professional and has proven language ability to communicate clearly and accurately in two languages. As the need for credentialed interpreters continues to grow, bilinguals have the opportunity to be part of a select group of specially trained professionals who have merged their language skills and their ideals of public service in the rewarding career of court interpretation.

Currently, the Supreme Court of Ohio Language Services Section maintains and distributes a roster of interpreters who may fall under four categories: Certified, Provisionally Qualified, Registered Sign Language and/or Registered Foreign Language. Here is a description of each category:

Certified – Foreign Language

Interpreters may obtain court interpreter **certification** in the following languages:

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|-----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Amharic | 6. French | 11. Mandarin | 16. Turkish |
| 2. Arabic | 7. Haitian-Creole | 12. Polish | 17. Vietnamese |
| 3. Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian | 8. Hmong | 13. Portuguese | |
| 4. Cantonese | 9. Khmer | 14. Russian | |
| 5. Filipino (Tagalog) | 10. Korean | 15. Spanish | |

These languages offer exams that measure the minimum competencies to be a court interpreter. To receive certification in one of these languages, a candidate must pass a written and an oral exam. The passing score for the written exam is 80 percent or better. The passing score for the oral exam is 70 percent or better in each part of the exam. To learn more about the steps, please see below.

Certified – Sign Language

A Certified Sign Language Interpreter is an interpreter who has received certification from the Supreme Court Language Services Program pursuant to Sup.R. 82. A certified sign language interpreter has demonstrated skills by successfully passing a written and oral exam and receiving Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) from the Registry of Interpreter for the Deaf (RID). A Certified Sign Language Interpreter has also passed a background check showing no convictions of crimes involving moral turpitude. SC:L credential was suspended in 2016. It is no longer offered.

Provisionally Qualified

Tied to these oral exams is the second category, **provisionally qualified**. To be considered provisionally qualified, a candidate must pass the written exam at 80 percent or better and score no less than 60 percent in each part of the oral exam. Candidates have three years to obtain certification otherwise their qualification expires.

Registered Interpreters – Foreign Language

Since the certified languages only cover a portion of the total languages used in Ohio courts, the Supreme Court of Ohio has allowed the Language Services Section under the Rules of Superintendence to maintain and distribute a roster of foreign language interpreters who are ineligible for certification because there is no oral exam available. The interpreters in this category are categorized as **registered interpreters**.

Registered interpreters are still required to demonstrate proficiency in the interpreter's target and source language as well as sufficient preparation to properly interpret in court. To qualify for the roster of Registered Interpreters, a candidate must also meet certain requirements; for example, pass the written exam and complete an oral assessment. Registered interpreters must also attend 24 hours of training designated by the section and must pass a background check. Here is a sample of the languages available for assessment:

Akan-Twi, Albanian, Amharic, Armenian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cebuano, Czech, Danish, Dari, Dutch, Ewe, Fante-Akan, Finnish, Ga, Georgian, German, Greek (Modern), Gujarati, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Kashmiri, Kazakh, Krio, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Malay, Malayalam, Mandingo-Bambara, Nepali, Pashto, Persian-Farsi, Punjabi, Romanian, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Slovak, Somali, Swahili, Tajik, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Wolof, Wu and Yoruba.

Registered Interpreters – Sign Language

A Registered Sign Language Interpreter is an interpreter who has registered with the Supreme Court Language Services Program, pursuant to Sup.R. 82.01. Registered Sign Language Interpreters hold generalist certification from the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, have scored 80 percent or better on the written exam, passed a background check, and have attended at least 24 hours of court interpreter training.

A comparison of categories is listed below as well as the complete list of requirements:

INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING

REQUIREMENTS

CERTIFIED INTERPRETER	PROVISIONALLY QUALIFIED	REGISTERED SIGN LANGUAGE INTEPRETER	REGISTERED FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be at least eighteen years old 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a citizen, legal resident, or have the legal right to live and work in the U.S. 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no conviction of any crime involving moral turpitude 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend orientation training before the written exam 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass written examination with a score of 80% or better 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend post-written examination training course (modes of interpretation) before the oral exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend post-written examination training course (modes training) before the oral exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend SCO courses in ethics (6hrs), legal terminology (6hrs) modes or other specialized legal training (12hrs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend three SCO courses: Ethics (6hrs), modes of interpretation (12hrs) and legal terminology (6hrs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass oral examination with a 70% or better in each part of the exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Score no less than 60% in each part of the oral exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold RID Generalist Certification set forth in Sup.R. 82.01(B)(4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an oral proficiency assessment and score at the top level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign oath to comply with Code of Ethics for Interpreters 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain credential, complete 24 hours of Continuing Interpreter Education (CIE) every 24 months. 			

STEPS TO COMPLETE CREDENTIALING

1. COMPLETE A WRITTEN EXAMINATION APPLICATION

- a. Complete the written examination application and submit it to the Language Services Program. After that, you will receive instructions on how to sign up for the test.
- b. As part of the application, registration for the Orientation Training is automatic. The program will send a registration confirmation prior to the training.

To see the official requirements regarding the Written Exam, please reference [Rule 81](#) of the Rules of Superintendence.

2. ATTEND AN ORIENTATION TRAINING

- a. Orientation is typically scheduled in December, March and May or June or each year.
- b. The training will include self-study and classroom instruction. You are required to attend the classroom instruction.
- c. The training is an overview of court interpreting, the code of ethics, and terminology. You will have additional time to prepare on your own before taking the exam. The training may be waived if you can show comparable training or preparation.

To see the [training schedule](#), please click on the link.

3. TAKE THE WRITTEN EXAM

- a. The written exam is an English proficiency exam; therefore, it is all in English.
- b. The exam contains 135 multiple-choice questions.
- c. The exam consists of General Language Proficiency, Legal Terms, and Ethics.
- d. The exam lasts 2:15 hours. The average candidate completes it in under 2 hours.
- e. It is key that you know synonyms, antonyms, idioms, as well as English grammar.
- f. The passing score is 80% (108 correct answers out of 135).

To learn more about [the written exam](#), please click on the link.

4. ATTEND A TWO-DAY POST-WRITTEN EXAM TRAINING (Modes of Interpretation Training)

- a. After passing the written exam, you may want to do court observations to guide your preparation. A [log form](#) has been created for you.
- b. The training will consist of self-study, zoom webinars and in person training as allowed.
- c. The training focuses on Sight- Translation, Consecutive, and Simultaneous interpretation. You will have about four months to prepare before taking the oral exam or assessment.
- d. Registered sign language interpreters may attend this training, or one specially designed for sign language interpreters.

5. SUBMIT BACKGROUND CHECK

- a. To make sure all requirements are met, you must complete forms to allow the Language Services Section to run a background check.
- b. You will be sent a link to complete the forms.
- c. A conviction involving moral turpitude may prevent you from obtaining certification.
- d. Make sure all your documentation is in before you take the oral exam/assessment.

6. TAKE THE ORAL EXAM (For certified or provisionally qualified candidates only)

- a. The exam measures your proficiency in English and your other language of expertise.
- b. The exam uses the three modes of interpretation to measure your language proficiency.
- c. The order of the exam is as follows: Sight-Translation, Consecutive, and Simultaneous.
- d. The test lasts approximately one hour.
- e. It is key that you practice the modes of interpretation daily leading to the test.
- f. To become certified, you must score 70% on each part of the oral exam. To become provisionally qualified you must score 60% on each part of the oral exam.

To learn more about [the oral exam](#), please click on the link.

7. COMPLETE AN ORAL PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT (For registered foreign language candidates only) OR SUBMIT YOUR RID/NAD GENERALIST CREDENTIAL

- a. You will be signed up to complete the oral proficiency assessment provided by ALTA Language Services.
- b. The Language Services Program will arrange your assessment.
- c. You must score at the top level to qualify for the registered roster.
- d. Sign language interpreters must submit an unexpired RID card and must be in good standing at the time of the application.

8. ATTEND THREE DESIGNATED TRAINING COURSES

- a. You must take three courses sponsored or approved by the Language Services Program: Ethics, Modes of Interpretation, and Legal Terminology before or after passing the oral proficiency assessment to be listed on the official roster. Sign language interpreters may substitute up to 12-hours of advanced legal training for the modes.

9. SIGN AN OATH TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF ETHICS

- a. Our office will send you an oath and confirm all paperwork is completed. Certified interpreters will receive an official certificate and ID from the Supreme Court of Ohio. All other will received an official ID.

10. AGREE TO BE LISTED ON THE SUPREME COURT ROSTER OF COURT INTERPRETERS

- a. Your name will appear among the few that have accomplished this goal. Once you are listed, you may receive calls from courts, attorneys, and other legal entities.