



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

Language Access Plan

*Approved by the Joint Committee on Judicial Administration of the District of Columbia,
the policy-making body for the District of Columbia Courts, on June 29, 2022.
(D.C. Code §11-1701).*

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I. LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry launched in 2019. The Interpreter Registry improves the quality and effectiveness of interpretation in the Court by standardizing interpreter testing, training, and responsibilities. As of 2022, 177 certified and qualified interpreters representing 52 languages are on the Interpreter Registry.
- In 2019, the Office of Court Interpreting Services (OCIS) developed a centralized database, the Web Interpreter and Translator System, to track interpreter and translator cases, monitor training compliance, process invoices, and streamline scheduling and services.
- Language access expanded in 2020 with the addition of a full-time, certified American Sign Language staff interpreter to benefit deaf litigants and jurors.
- The Court ranked #12 in the nation in the 2020 Justice Index published by the National Center for Access to Justice on matters related to language access. (The Court previously ranked #16 in this category in the 2016 Justice Index.)
- In 2020, the Court developed the nation's first Amharic language court interpreter certification examination. The exam was partially funded by a State Justice Institute grant and completed in collaboration with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). The Court administered the exam in 2021 and 2022 and donated it to the NCSC in 2022 to make the exam available for use across the country.
- In 2021, OCIS developed and conducted a skills-building workshop for prospective Amharic court interpreters to prepare them for the certification exam. This workshop was held in 2021 and 2022 in advance of the Amharic court interpreter certification exam administered during those years.
- In 2021, the Court launched the D.C. Courts Mobile application that provides quick access to pertinent information, including how to request an interpreter, view cases scheduled in court that day, access legal service providers, and provide feedback or file a complaint about language access services in English, Spanish, Amharic, Chinese (Traditional), French, Korean, and Vietnamese.
- In 2022, OCIS implemented an on-line language access toolkit to assist judges and court staff when engaging with limited English proficient (LEP) individuals.
- In 2022, OCIS published a dedicated language access page on the Court's internet website to centralize all information needed by members of the public, including LEP court users, lawyers, and interpreters, to access language services at the Court.
- In 2022, the Superior Court began providing LEP parties no-cost translation of court orders, notices, and other court documents upon request.

II. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The District of Columbia Courts (the Court) is committed to eliminating limited English proficiency as a barrier to meaningful participation in the judicial process and accessing court services. Recognizing that improved language access results in increased access to justice, language access is and has long been a critical component of the Court's Strategic Plan.

This Language Access Plan provides the framework for the Court's Language Access Program. The Plan states the Court's language access policies, identifies the services available to limited English proficient (LEP) persons¹ at the Court, and establishes operational guidelines for providing language assistance at the Court in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,² the nondiscrimination provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968,³ and the regulations implementing these federal laws. Although Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act,⁴ rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Safe Streets Act, the accommodations provided by the Court are also included in this Plan.

Effective implementation of this Language Access Plan is essential to achieving the mission of the Court:

*To protect rights and liberties, uphold and interpret the law,
and resolve disputes peacefully, fairly, and effectively in the
District of Columbia.*

III. COURT POLICY REGARDING LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

A. Meaningful Access

The Court and its personnel shall provide meaningful access⁵ to court proceedings⁶ and operations⁷ at no cost to LEP persons. Court staff must take reasonable steps to ensure that communications between the Court and the LEP person are not impaired due to the limited English proficiency of the individual. Court staff must take reasonable steps to effectively

¹ "Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons" are individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

² 42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.*

³ 42 U.S.C. § 3789d(c).

⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 12101 *et seq.*

⁵ "Meaningful access" means "[l]anguage assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or [services] provided to English proficient individuals." Department of Justice Language Access Plan (Mar. 2012), <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/open/legacy/2012/05/07/language-access-plan.pdf> (footnote omitted). *See also* Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Language Access Plan, <https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/plan/lap.cfm> (last visited October 11, 2019).

⁶ "Court proceedings" include any hearing, trial, or other appearance before a judicial officer of the D.C. Superior Court or the D.C. Court of Appeals.

⁷ "Operations" include services provided by any office of the D.C. Superior Court or the D.C. Court of Appeals or any service or program managed or conducted by the Court that involves contact with the public or parties to a case.

inform LEP individuals of the availability of free language assistance services at the Court, chief among them the interpretation and translation services.

B. Interpretation Services

It is the Court's policy to provide interpretation⁸ services free of charge, onsite and virtually, for all court proceedings, events, and ancillary services.⁹

Interpreters serve a critical role at the Court. They ensure that justice is carried out fairly for LEP parties and other court users by interpreting the spoken word as accurately as possible. Anything less could undermine the Court's ability to determine facts and administer justice and the LEP person's due process rights. For LEP individuals, accurate interpretation is the only way they can testify about their experience and observations, preserve their evidence for the record, and challenge the testimony of adverse witnesses. Accordingly, all interpreters used at the Court must meet minimum standards established by D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry.

When hiring contract interpreters, the Office of Court Interpreting Services (OCIS) shall give priority to certified¹⁰ interpreters on the Interpreter Registry. If a certified interpreter is not available, a qualified¹¹ interpreter on the Interpreter Registry may be engaged. To cover an immediate need of the Court or for less common languages, an interpreter who is not on the D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry may be hired, including U.S. Department of State Seminar or Conference level interpreters, private agency interpreters, or Language Line Solutions telephonic or video remote interpreters.

C. Translation Services

It is the Court's policy to provide translation¹² services free of charge to assist LEP persons doing business with the Court. This includes the translation of vital documents, notices, court orders, and other court documents. Translations may be completed by OCIS staff, Interpreter Registry members, or outsourced to a translation agency.

⁸ Interpreters render a message spoken from one language into another language, including sign language.

⁹ Ancillary services include home studies, mediations, intakes, interviews, supervised visitation, and Program for Agreement and Cooperation in Contested Custody Cases (PAC) seminars.

¹⁰ Certified interpreters on the Interpreter Registry are interpreters who are certified or have passed an interpretation examination administered by one of the following:

1. Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf.
2. Administrative Office of the United States Courts-Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (Spanish only).
3. A state court system that administers a State Court Interpreter Certification examination, including those developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC); or
4. United States Department of State (DOS) Conference level.

¹¹ Qualified interpreters on the Interpreter Registry are interpreters for whom a court interpreter certification examination does not exist, but have passed the DOS Seminar level exam, or have passed each of the following three exams:

1. The NCSC written English exam.
2. An oral proficiency interview in English; and
3. An oral proficiency interview in the target language.

¹² Translators render a message from a written language text into another written language text.

1. Vital Documents

A vital document is a document that contains information critical for obtaining services or benefits, is required by law, or is one that contains substantive or procedural information material to a litigant's ability to participate fully in his or her matter before the Court. Vital documents include frequently used public documents for mass distribution, such as form complaints, petitions, applications, and informational brochures regarding essential court services. The Court will provide vital documents in English, Spanish, and Amharic.¹³ Vital documents may also be provided in additional languages based on demonstrated need by the division responsible for creating or distributing the vital document.

2. Court Notices and Court Orders

Court notices and orders issued in a case contain critical information. As such, they will be translated into any language upon request by the judge, the director of the division where the case is filed, or by any LEP party to a case free of charge.

3. Evidentiary Materials

Parties and attorneys are responsible for obtaining their own translations of their evidentiary materials and exhibits, including but not limited to written documents, social media information, messaging, and audio/visual recordings. OCIS cannot provide translations or transcriptions of materials submitted to the Court as evidence.

4. Case Filings

All case filings including but not limited to complaints, petitions, and motions, must be filed in English. OCIS will not provide translations of case filings. Official court forms that are available at the courthouse or on the Court's webpage in languages other than English are to be used only as guides for individuals who cannot read the English-language forms.

A filing in a language other than English may be accepted in an emergency where the filing is time-sensitive, the applicable resource center or self-help center is closed, and no person qualified to provide competent translation or interpretation assistance is available. OCIS may provide sight translation services of the document and interpretation services between the LEP party and the Clerk's Office staff to aid in communication. However, OCIS cannot provide written translations of case filings or fill out forms on behalf of a party.

¹³ According to the U.S. Department of Justice LEP Guidance, the Court is to provide translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent or 1,000, whichever is less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. In contrast to the federal standard, the District of Columbia requires its agencies to provide interpretation and translation services for the District's LEP population that constitutes three percent or 500 individuals, whichever is less, of the population served or encountered or likely to be served or encountered. See Language Access Act of 2004 (<https://dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ohr/publication/attachments/LanguageAccessActof2004-English.pdf>). The District of Columbia's standard does not apply to the Court.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

A. Responsibility to Provide Language Assistance Services

1. The Court's Leadership

A driving force behind the vision and commitment to the Court's Language Access Program is the Court's leadership. Supporting initiatives and allocating resources that improve and enhance the Court's language access services demonstrate leadership's continued commitment to ensuring meaningful access for LEP and Deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals to the judicial process and court services.

2. The Language Access Coordinator

The Court Interpreting Services and Language Access Program Coordinator (the Language Access Coordinator) is responsible for implementing the Court's Language Access Plan and updating the Plan to incorporate programmatic improvements. The Language Access Coordinator monitors the Language Access Program's effectiveness and performance; conducts periodic language access needs assessments; reports annually on the status of the Program; oversees the D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry; ensures the Court's daily interpretation needs are met; manages the Court's translation services; and directs outreach and training programs for LEP court users, judicial officers, court staff, interpreters and translators, attorneys, and external stakeholders.

The Language Access Coordinator manages the operation of the Office of Court Interpreting Services (OCIS), which is the point of contact for all requests for language services at the Court. OCIS is staffed by a full-time, certified Spanish language court interpreter; a full-time, certified American Sign Language interpreter; a Program Officer who administers the D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry and the Web Interpreter and Translator System; and a Court Clerk.

3. The Language Access Advisory Committee

The Language Access Advisory Committee was established by Joint Administrative Order [15-1](#) with the purpose of advising the Language Access Coordinator on ways to implement and improve language access services contemplated in the Language Access Plan. The Committee is chaired by a judicial officer appointed by the Chief Judges of the Court of Appeals and the Superior Court. Committee members represent court-wide leadership and external stakeholders who serve a significant number of the District of Columbia's LEP residents. Committee members serve a 3-year term and are eligible for reappointment.

4. The Court Staff

All Court staff should understand the importance of providing language assistance to LEP persons. Frontline staff in Clerk's Offices, the Information Desk, courtrooms, and self-help centers are often the first points of contact for members of the public, including LEP persons. Court staff must take reasonable steps to recognize the need for and effectively inform LEP

individuals of the availability of free language assistance services.

Divisions that process cases are to ensure that staff enter a party's need for interpreting services into the Court's case management system when the employee knows or has reason to know of such need. The case management system is configured to transmit this information for any court proceeding that is scheduled in the case to the OCIS Web Interpreter and Translator System (WITS). WITS is a web-based system that supports the administration of the Interpreter Registry, interpretation and translation case management, performance data management, and provides interpreters and translators with individual portals for hiring, scheduling, and billing purposes.

5. The LEP Parties, Attorneys, and Advocates

LEP parties, their attorneys, and advocates should understand the importance of identifying the need for language access services as early in the court process as possible. Early notification to the Court safeguards the LEP party's right to meaningful access to court proceedings and services, supports efficient court operations and case management, ensures that a qualified interpreter is scheduled by OCIS, and avoids the need to continue or reschedule cases because no interpreter is available.

Translation needs should also be identified and requested as early as possible to ensure the LEP person has the necessary information and time to adequately prepare for court proceedings and events.

OCIS is to ensure that links to language access resources, including the Request an Interpreter form, are maintained on the Court's internet webpage at <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/language-access-services>.

B. Notice of Language Access Services

It is critical that LEP individuals are aware of the availability of free comprehensive language access services at the Court and that they avail themselves of these services to ensure their meaningful access to court proceedings and services. The Court should therefore provide notice of its language access services throughout the D.C. Courts Campus with posted signs, informational material, electronic media, and engagement with LEP community organizations and LEP advocates.

1. Signs at Major Points of Access to Court Buildings

The Court will maintain at all entry points of the Moultrie Courthouse and Buildings A, B, and C large informational signs in multiple languages that inform LEP parties of available services in their own languages, including their right to an interpreter free of charge and how to provide language access feedback or complaints.

2. Court Notices

Notices issued by the Court’s case management system will advise LEP parties in English, Spanish, and Amharic that free language assistance services are available at the Court. The message on the notices will state:

Interpreting and Translation Services:

The D.C. Courts offers free language access services to people having business with the court who are deaf or who are non-English speakers. Parties to a case may request free translations of court orders and other court documents. To ask for an interpreter or translation, please contact the Clerk’s Office listed for your case. For more information, visit <https://www.dccourts.gov/language-access>.

Language access is important to the D.C. Courts. You can provide feedback on language services by visiting <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services#language-access>.

Servicios de interpretación y traducción:

Los Tribunales del Distrito de Columbia ofrecen servicios gratuitos de acceso al idioma a las personas sordas o que no hablan inglés que tienen asuntos que atender en el tribunal. Las partes de un caso pueden solicitar traducciones gratuitas de las órdenes judiciales y otros documentos del tribunal. Para solicitar un intérprete o una traducción, póngase en contacto con la Secretaría de su caso. Para más información, visite <https://www.dccourts.gov/language-access>.

El acceso al idioma es importante para los Tribunales del Distrito de Columbia. Puede dar su opinión sobre los servicios de idiomas visitando <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services#language-access>.

የቃልና የጽሑፍ ትርጓሜ አገልግሎቶች:

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የቋንቋ ተደራሽነት ለዲ.ሲ. ፍርድ ቤቶች አስፈላጊ ነው። የቋንቋ አገልግሎቶች በተመለከተ አስተያየትዎን <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services#language-access> በመጎብኘት መስጠት ይችላሉ።

3. Language Identification Tools

To encourage LEP persons to self-identify, the Court will provide language identification cards at public counters court wide. The cards contain the message, “*Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you,*” in 21 languages.

To further facilitate communication by an LEP individual when visiting the courthouse, Court Clerks will have desk cards that include an *I Speak...* card in the 52 languages requested at the Court which the LEP person can reference to identify their language.

4. Digital Notice

The Court will provide notice of the availability of free language access services at the Court in the top seven languages that are most frequently encountered at the Court, including Spanish and Amharic, on the Court’s website and on the Court’s mobile app.

5. Community Engagement

The Court will continue to engage with LEP community organizations and LEP advocates such as the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, the Consortium of Legal Aid Providers in the District of Columbia, and the Washington D.C. Office of Human Rights, to inform the LEP public of the availability of language access services at the Court at no charge.

C. Identification and Assessment of Language Access Needs

The Language Access Coordinator will conduct periodic language access needs assessments of performance and demographic data to evaluate and update the Court's Language Access Program. The LEP population in Washington, D.C. is derived from data published by the U.S. Census Bureau every ten years. Language access needs and changes in the LEP population are monitored using demographic data for Washington, D.C. and the greater metropolitan area, utilization and other performance data maintained by OCIS, and survey responses of LEP court users, judicial officers, court staff, attorneys, interpreters, translation project managers, and external stakeholders. Based on a combination of these sources, Spanish-speaking LEP persons consistently represent the overwhelming need for language access services at the Court.

LEP Estimates at the Court

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Washington, D.C. as of April 1, 2020¹⁴ was 689,545 of which 17.2% of the population over the age of 5 spoke a language other than English at home. In calendar year 2021, OCIS provided 4,619 spoken and sign language interpreters for 3,566 events.¹⁵ Spanish interpretation events represented 71.20% of all interpretation events followed by ASL at 12.34% and Amharic at 7.01%.

2021 CY Distinct Interpretation Events	Total	Percentage
All Languages	3,566	
Spanish	2,539	71.20%
Deaf – American Sign Language (ASL)	440	12.34%
Amharic	250	7.01%
Arabic	44	1.23%
French	37	1.04%
Turkish	12	0.34%
Deaf – Relay	33	0.93%
Mandarin	23	0.64%

¹⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the Census Bureau's ability to collect and process data, which could potentially have led to an undercount in the data. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/04/27/2020-census-undercount/>.

¹⁵ In March 2020, the Court suspended in-person operations and commenced remote hearings due to the public health emergency. Consequently, the number of interpreter events and assignments decreased significantly.

2021 CY Distinct Interpretation Events	Total	Percentage
Korean	17	0.48%
Urdu	16	0.45%
Russian	15	0.42%
Turkish	12	0.34%
Portuguese	10	0.28%
Vietnamese	9	0.25%
Cantonese	8	0.22%
Indonesian	8	0.22%
Persian	8	0.22%
Pashtu	5	0.14%
Somali	5	0.14%
Dari	4	0.11%
Hindi	4	0.11%
Nepali	4	0.11%
Tagalog	4	0.11%
Akan	3	0.08%
Arabic (Moroccan)	3	0.08%
Bosnian	3	0.08%
Italian	3	0.08%
Japanese	3	0.08%
Thai	3	0.08%
Albanian	2	0.06%
Bengali	2	0.06%
Mongolian	2	0.06%
Yoruba	2	0.06%
Bulgarian	1	0.03%
Burmese	1	0.03%
Ewe	1	0.03%
German	1	0.03%
Greek	1	0.03%
Kurdish	1	0.03%
Oromo	1	0.03%
Punjabi	1	0.03%
Romanian	1	0.03%

In calendar year 2021, Spanish translation requests represented 73.75% of all translation requests received by OCIS, followed by Amharic at 15.64% and French at 4.05%.

2021 CY Distinct Translations	Total	Percentage
All Languages	518	
Spanish	382	73.75%
Amharic	81	15.64%
French	21	4.05%
Vietnamese	6	1.16%

2021 CY Distinct Translations	Total	Percentage
Tigrinya	4	0.77%
Bengali	4	0.77%
Korean	4	0.77%
Mandarin	4	0.77%
Russian	3	0.58%
Indonesian	3	0.58%
Arabic	2	0.39%
Tagalog	2	0.39%
Turkish	2	0.39%

D. Additional Language Access Services Available at the Court

In addition to interpretation and translation services, the Court provides bilingual staff to assist court users; a language access resource page on the Court’s website for LEP court users and the public at large; a language access toolkit on the Court’s intranet for judicial officers and court staff engaging with LEP court users; bilingual signage throughout the court campus; remote and virtual interpretation services; and testing and training.

1. Bilingual Employees

Given that approximately 70% of LEP court users require Spanish language access services, the Court employs Spanish bilingual staff to enhance its Language Access Program and provide language access services to its Spanish speaking LEP users. The Court has 28 bilingual Spanish clerical positions as of April 26, 2022. These employees are not trained court interpreters however they have demonstrated the ability to provide information about their office in Spanish and may assist LEP court users without the need for an interpreter. The bilingual employees work at key points of contact with the public such as the self-help centers, information and intake centers, and customer assistance windows. The Domestic Violence Division also employs bilingual Spanish attorney negotiators to negotiate consent agreements between parties, and the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division employs a bilingual Spanish mediator to mediate family agreements between Spanish speaking parties.

2. Bilingual Court-Appointed Lawyers

Under the Criminal Justice Act, the Court may appoint bilingual Spanish criminal defense attorneys who have been tested and qualified by OCIS for their language skills to represent Spanish speaking clients. The Counsel for Child Abuse and Neglect program also has bilingual Spanish attorneys who have been similarly tested and qualified by OCIS.

3. Use of Technology

The Court embraces and promotes the capabilities of technology to expand language access services to the public, including LEP individuals.

a. Virtual Interpretation Services

Video conferencing technology is in place in all courtrooms and event locations at the court campus to allow for virtual interpretation services. Virtual interpretation services are provided by OCIS interpreters over video conferencing platforms such as WebEx and Zoom. The Court contracts with Language Line Solutions to provide virtual interpretation services over the video conferencing platforms WebEx and Zoom if OCIS interpreters are not available. Language Line Solutions also provides remote audio interpretation services over the telephone which may be used in the absence of a bilingual staff member or an interpreter. This service is best used for short hearings, child support interviews, Multi-Door Dispute Resolution intake interviews, public information counters, and phone calls with LEP persons.

b. Onsite Remote Interpretation Stations

To support the Court’s hybrid operation, OCIS maintains two onsite stations for virtual interpretation that are equipped with the technology necessary to ensure best practices during the delivery of spoken and sign language interpretation.

c. Interpreting Equipment

The Court provides interpreting equipment consisting of a transmitter and a receiver which allows the interpreter to interpret simultaneously (real time). The interpreter speaks into the transmitter and the LEP individual listens using the receiver. The equipment is essential for efficient interpretation and ideal for lengthy hearings, multiple LEP users, and to promote social distancing.

4. Digital Media

a. D.C. Court’s Website

The Court’s internet website, <https://www.dccourts.gov>, is available in English, Spanish, Amharic, Chinese, French, Korean, and Vietnamese. Interactive online interviews to complete forms for self-represented users and frequently filed in Domestic Violence, Family, Civil, Probate, and Tax cases, and cases on appeal are available in Spanish.

b. Language Access Page

All information needed by members of the public, including LEP court users, attorneys, and interpreters, to access language services at the Court is centralized on a Language Access Page on the Court’s website: <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/language-access-services>.

c. Language Access Toolkit

OCIS maintains an on-line language access toolkit on the Court’s intranet that centralizes all the information judicial officers and court staff can easily refer to when engaging with LEP parties.

d. D.C. Courts Mobile App

The D.C. Courts Mobile application contains a language assistance feature in English, Spanish, Amharic, Chinese, French, Korean, and Vietnamese that provides LEP individuals quick access to information, such as how to request an interpreter, view cases scheduled in court that day, and a list of legal service providers.

e. D.C. Court’s Complaint/Feedback Portal

The Court maintains a language access complaint/feedback portal online at <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/language-access-services>. The Language Access Coordinator monitors the portal daily and responds promptly to the feedback.

E. Accommodation for the Deaf and Hard-Of-Hearing

It is the Court’s intent to provide access to court proceedings, services, programs, and other activities that are offered by the Court to individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. To ensure meaningful access, the following equipment and services are available.

1. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

CART may be an appropriate accommodation for Deaf or hard-of-hearing persons who read English as it converts spoken word into English text. CART is available through the ADA Coordinator’s Office.

2. Assistive Listening Devices

Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) may be an appropriate accommodation for hard-of-hearing persons as ALDs amplify sound directly into the ear. They are available through the Information Technology Division’s Courtroom Technology Branch and in courtrooms throughout the court campus.

3. UbiDuo

The UbiDuo may be an option for Deaf or hard-of-hearing persons who read and write English. The UbiDuo is a stand-alone, portable communication device that consists of two keyboards and two split screens that display both sides of a conversation. The device enables simultaneous, real-time communication allowing Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons to communicate face-to-face by typing. UbiDuo is available through the ADA Coordinator’s Office.

F. Training

The LEP court user’s degree of meaningful access to court proceedings and services depends in large measure on the training provided to court interpreters, court staff, and judicial officers on the Court’s Language Access Program.

1. D.C. Courts Interpreter Registry

All Interpreter Registry interpreters are required to complete an orientation workshop that covers skills building, team interpretation, ethics, professional conduct, court procedures and protocols, WITS, and OCIS administration. Interpreters also receive training on providing interpretation services remotely via the Court's video conferencing platforms. To remain in good standing, interpreters on the Interpreter Registry must complete twelve hours of continuing education every two years on matters related to interpretation and/or translation.

2. Judicial Officers

New judges are trained by the Language Access Coordinator on the Court's Language Access Program and best practices for working with interpreters. Training videos created by the Language Access Advisory Committee also instruct judicial officers on the proper role and use of an interpreter and courtroom procedures using an interpreter. Judicial Officers have also been provided with a bench card that contains standard questions to assist in evaluating a court user's English fluency and guidelines on accessing and providing language services.

3. Court Staff

In 2019, the Court implemented a training called Identifying Language Needs and Providing Language Assistance Services in a Court Setting. This training is mandatory for all staff who work directly with the public. It has been incorporated into the on-boarding of new employees at the Court and is offered twice a year by OCIS. OCIS also provides periodic and upon request trainings on the Court's Language Access Program, the role of an interpreter, best practices for working with an interpreter in person or remotely, and on how to coordinate interpretation services with OCIS.

G. Language Access Plan Contact

Questions about this Language Access Plan or the Court's Language Access Program may be directed to:

Language Access Coordinator
District of Columbia Courts
Special Operations Division
500 Indiana Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001
(202) 879-4828
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