



## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS

# Language Access Program 2025 Annual Report

Superior Court of the District of Columbia  
Special Operations Division -  
Office of Court Interpreting Services

May 5, 2026

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **A. Interpretation Services**

In calendar year 2025, the Office of Court Interpreting Services (OCIS) assigned interpreters on 10,042 occasions to fulfill 8,966 interpretation events in 57 distinct languages. This represents a 6% decrease in the number of interpreter assignments and a 1% decrease in the number of events compared to 2024. Of all interpretation requests, 69.8% were for Spanish speakers. Other frequently requested languages included Amharic (8.1%), American Sign Language (ASL) (7.7%), Arabic (2.2%), French (2.0%), and Russian (1.3%). Interpreting services were provided for both in-person and remote hearings.

### **B. Translation Services**

In 2025, OCIS processed 801 document translations compared to 854 in 2024, a decrease of 6%. These translations included court orders, notices, summons, and forms. Spanish translations accounted for 80.9% of all translation requests and Amharic accounted for 11.2%.

### **C. Testing and Training Services**

OCIS facilitated the administration of 9 exams and assessments for contract interpreters and Spanish-speaking panel attorneys and 44 training events for contract interpreters, judicial officers, law clerks, and court personnel in 2025.

### **D. Language Access Resources**

In 2025, OCIS deployed its upgraded data management system (the Web Interpreter and Translator System or “WITS”) to improve and enhance data accuracy, transparency, and reporting capabilities. In addition, key language access resources for external and internal stakeholders were published and updated on digital platforms, printed material, and multimedia content, including but not limited to a dedicated Language Access page on the DC Courts’ website to inform external stakeholders of the language access services available at the Courts, and a Language Access Toolkit published on the Courts’ intranet to support court staff

and internal stakeholders when engaging with a member of the public requiring language assistance.

**E. National Ranking**

The Courts' language access program ranked 12th nationwide in the National Center for Access to Justice's most recent Justice Index ranking for language access in 2021.<sup>1</sup> (The Courts previously ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in this category in the 2016 Justice Index.)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ncj.org/state-rankings/justice-index/language-access>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Mission

The language access program of the District of Columbia Courts (the Courts) is an overarching, comprehensive program for language access services that is designed and implemented to serve the language access needs of the Courts' internal and external stakeholders.

Consistent with the Courts' vision statement, "Open to All, Trusted by All, Justice for All," and its strategic goals,<sup>2</sup> the mission of the language access program is to provide effective and timely language access services at no cost for Limited English Proficient (LEP) and deaf and hard-of-hearing persons doing business with the Courts in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990,<sup>3</sup> Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794),<sup>4</sup> Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.*),<sup>5</sup> and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. § 10228).<sup>6</sup>

### B. Evolution

The language access program has evolved since its inception as the Courts' interpreting services program with a limited mandate of providing interpretation services under certain circumstances. The Office of Court Interpreting Services was established in 1987 as an office in the Special Operations Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Over the years, the breadth of OCIS' services expanded, and its mandate was formally established by

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<sup>2</sup> The six main goals outlined in the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan are: Access to Justice for All; Public Trust and Confidence; A Great Place to Work; Effective Court Administration; Fair and Timely Case Resolution; and Racial Equity and Cultural Competence.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/ada/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/disability/laws-guidance/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/needy-families/civil-rights-requirements/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/omnibus-crime-control-and-safe-streets-act-1968>; 34 U.S.C. § 10228.

Administrative Orders 98-12, 09-04,<sup>7</sup> and 09-09,<sup>8</sup> culminating in Administrative Order 14-15,<sup>9</sup> which was issued by Chief Judge Lee F. Satterfield in 2014.

In 2012, the position of OCIS Supervisor was reclassified to Language Access Coordinator. The Language Access Coordinator was tasked with the responsibility of implementing and updating the DC Courts' Language Access Plan,<sup>10</sup> which provides the framework for the language access program. In 2015, Joint Administrative Order 15-1<sup>11</sup> was issued to establish a Language Access Advisory Committee "for the purpose of advising the Court's Language Access Coordinator on ways to implement and improve the D.C. Courts' Language Access Plan."

### **C. Services**

The language access program is administered by OCIS,<sup>12</sup> except for the testing and hiring of Spanish and English bilingual employees,<sup>13</sup> which falls under the purview of the Human Resources Division of the District of Columbia Courts. The following components of the language access program are covered in this annual report:

- Interpretation services
- Translation services
- Testing and training services
- Language access resources

### **D. OCIS Organizational Structure**

OCIS is a high-volume, fast-paced office that manages an Interpreter Registry of over 200 contractors and engages multiple independent agencies to provide interpretation and

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/09-04\\_Court\\_Interpreting\\_Services\\_Supersedes%2098-12.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/09-04_Court_Interpreting_Services_Supersedes%2098-12.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/09-09.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/14-15-Court-Interpreting-Services-Vacates-Administrative-Orders-09-09-09-04-and-98-12.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/divisionspdfs/Language\\_Access\\_Plan\\_DC\\_Courts.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/divisionspdfs/Language_Access_Plan_DC_Courts.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/Joint-Administrative-Order-creating-Language-Access-Advisory-Committee\\_15-1.pdf](https://www.dccourts.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/Joint-Administrative-Order-creating-Language-Access-Advisory-Committee_15-1.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services#language-access>

<sup>13</sup> There are currently 35 positions designated as bilingual (Spanish) within the Courts.

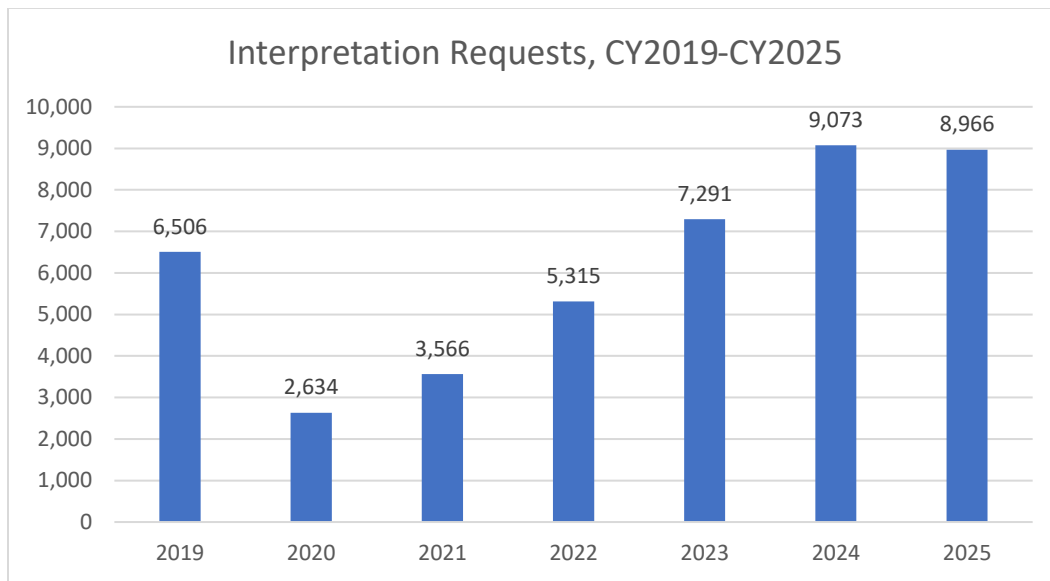
translation services to meet the Courts’ daily language access needs.

OCIS is staffed by five employees: a Language Access Coordinator who manages OCIS staff, operations, and the language access program; a Program Officer who administers the DC Courts’ Interpreter Registry; a Program Specialist who processes interpreter requests; and two Spanish Interpreters who provide translation and interpretation services and administrative support.

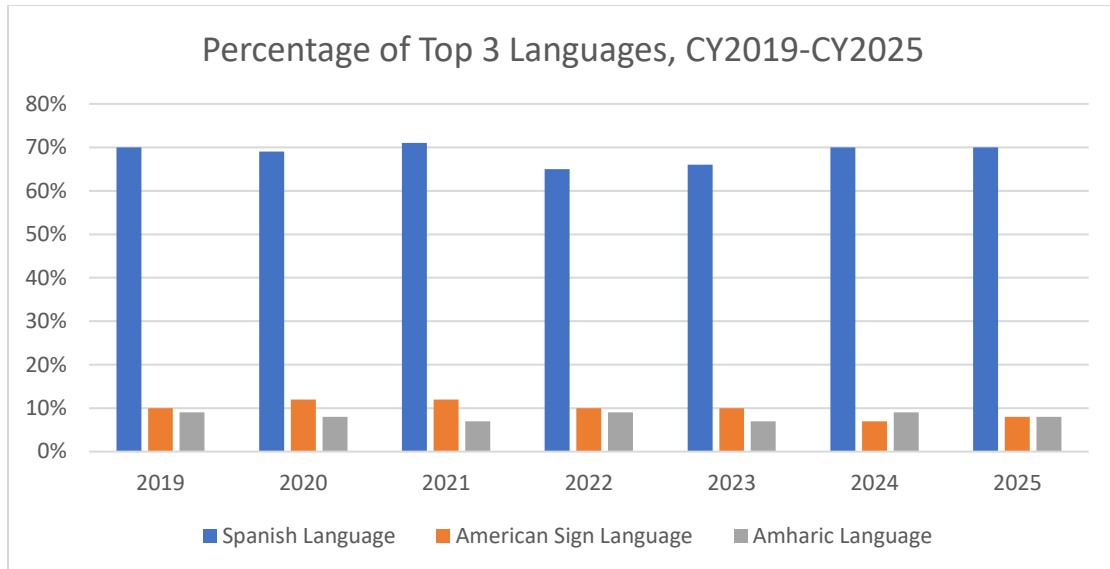
## II. INTERPRETATION SERVICES

### A. 2025 Interpretation Data

Interpretation services are provided by OCIS staff, DC Courts’ Interpreter Registry contract interpreters, and independent interpretation agencies. In 2025, OCIS fulfilled 8,966 requests for interpretation services in 57 distinct languages (see Appendix A). This is a slight decrease of approximately 1% from the number of interpretation requests received in 2024.



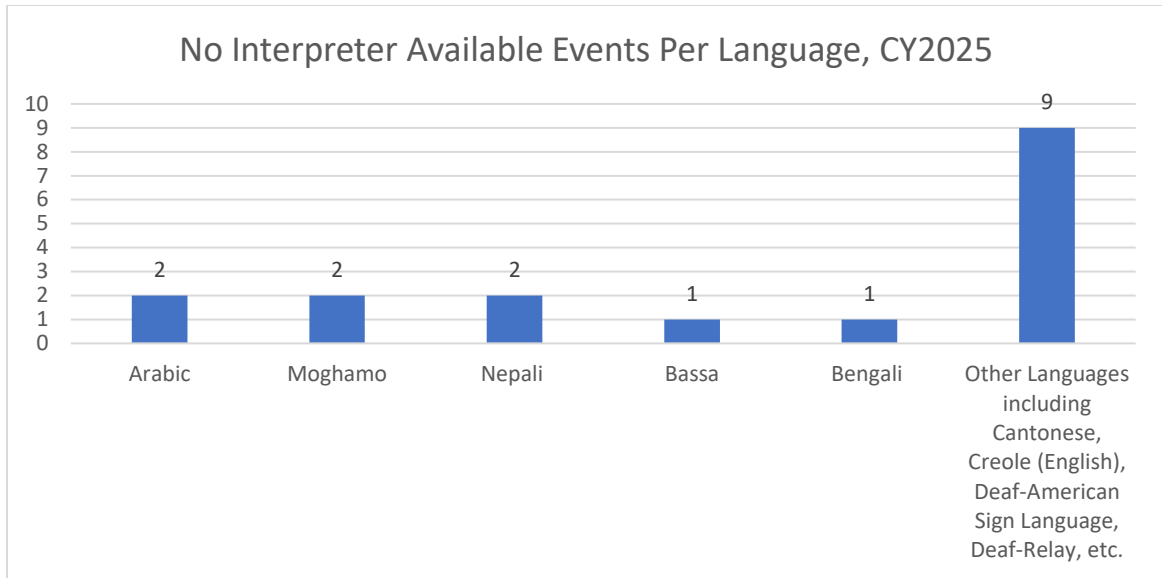
As in previous years, the three most requested languages in 2025 were Spanish, Amharic, and ASL. Spanish consistently represents the vast majority of requests at approximately 70%.



The data for ASL requests includes interpretation services provided to deaf prospective jurors summoned for jury service. In 2025, 50 deaf jurors were issued summonses to report for jury duty. Of those, 1 deaf juror was empaneled and served for 5 days.

In 2025, OCIS had an overall fulfillment rate of 99.81%. OCIS was unable to provide interpreters for 17 events (0.19% of all requests) on the scheduled dates. Many of the requests for which OCIS was unable to procure interpreters were initial hearings for which OCIS had little-to-no forewarning. For subsequent hearings, OCIS provided interpreter services and a telephonic interpretation service, Language Line Solutions (LLS), was used on the initial hearing date.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> LLS usage is not included in OCIS' interpretation data.



## B. Delivery of Interpretation Services

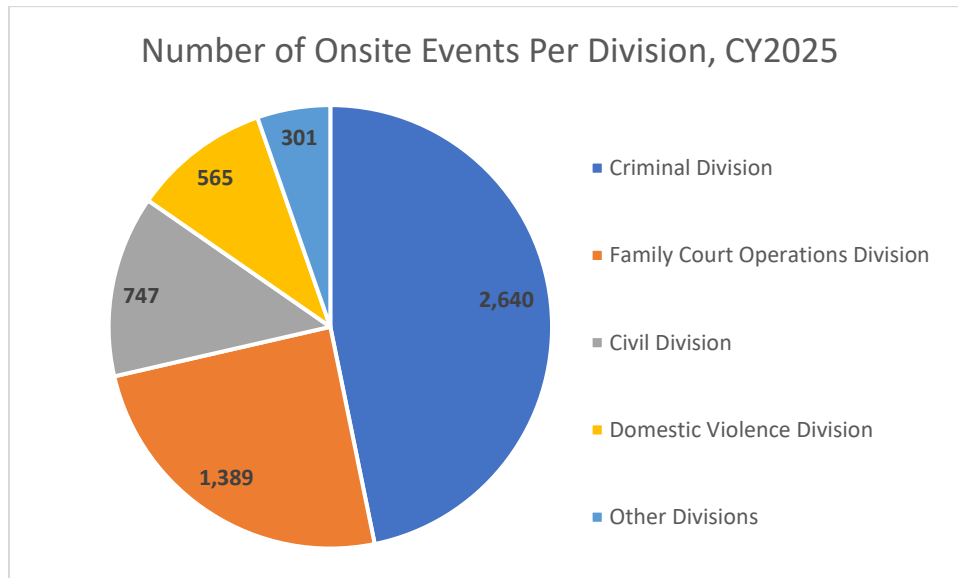
During 2025, OCIS continued to innovate, leverage technology, and implement effective processes and procedures to ensure timely and efficient interpretation services for virtual, remote, hybrid, and in-person proceedings.

OCIS has three video remote interpretation (VRI) rooms for onsite<sup>15</sup> interpreters in the courthouse. The VRI rooms are equipped with desktop computers and necessary equipment for the optimum delivery of services, including additional support items like ring lights and backdrops to enhance ASL interpretation and ensure clear visual communication of linguistic markers. The VRI rooms also provide privacy to safeguard the confidential nature of certain proceedings and minimize distractions both to interpreters and to LEP or deaf persons. Each VRI room has a back-up laptop available for interpreters to use in the event they encounter technical difficulties logging into the desktop computers.

Onsite interpretation requests remained steady during the course of 2025. Of the interpretation requests fulfilled by OCIS, interpreters were present onsite for 5,642 (62.93%) and remote for 3,324 (37.07%). The majority of onsite interpretation events took place in the Criminal Division, followed by the Family Court Operations Division, Domestic Violence Division,

<sup>15</sup> For OCIS purposes, "onsite" assignments are those performed at the courthouse, in person in the courtroom.

Civil Division, and other divisions:<sup>16</sup>

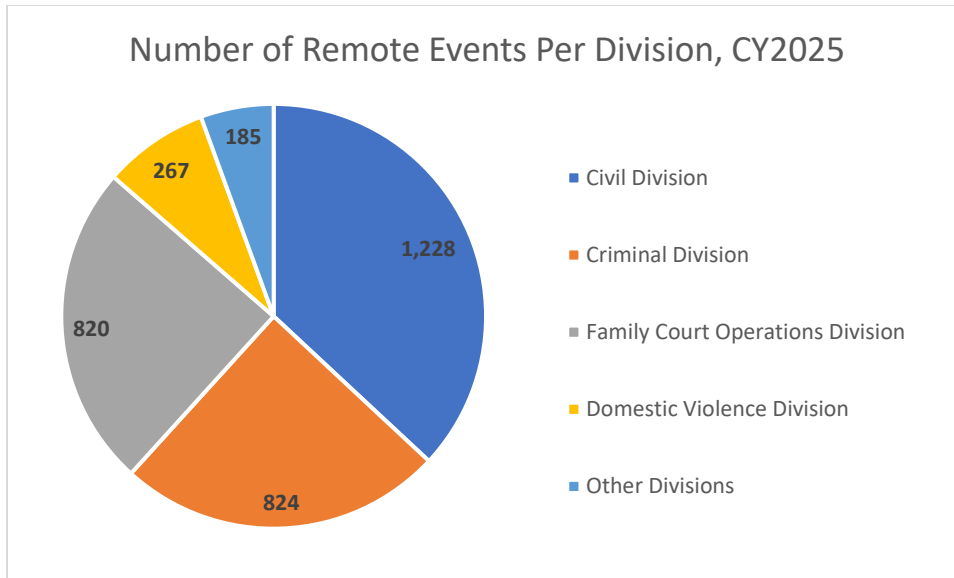


The majority of remote interpretation events took place in the Civil Division, followed by the Criminal Division, Family Court Operations Division, Domestic Violence Division, and other divisions:<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Other areas where onsite interpretation events took place were the Special Operations Division, at approximately 2.5% of all onsite interpretation requests, followed by Probate Division, Court Social Services Division, Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division, and the Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, each at less than 1% of all onsite interpretation events.

<sup>17</sup> Other areas where remote interpretation events took place were at Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division, Probate Division, Special Operations Division, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Crime Victims Compensation Program, Court Social Services Division, and the Center for Education and Training, each at less than 1% of all remote interpretation events.



### III. TRANSLATION SERVICES

#### A. 2025 Translation Data

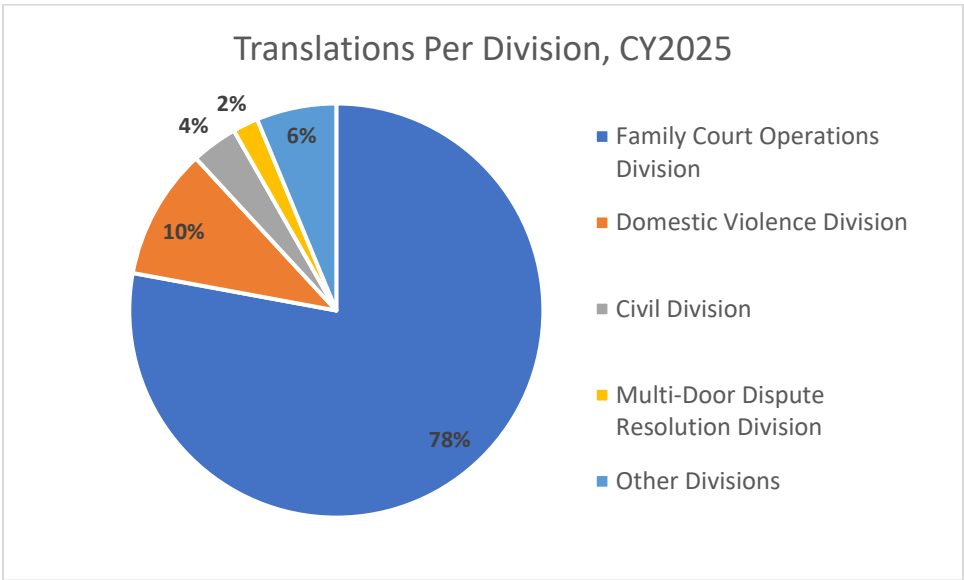
It is the Courts' policy to provide translation<sup>18</sup> services free of charge to assist LEP persons doing business with the Courts. This includes the translation of vital documents, notices, court orders, and other court documents. OCIS outsources translations to a translation agency and may also assign translations to OCIS staff and Interpreter Registry contract interpreters.

In 2025, OCIS produced 801 document translations compared to 854 in 2024, a decrease of 6%. The total translation word count in 2025 was 518,958, a decrease of 10% compared to the word count of 576,825 in 2024.

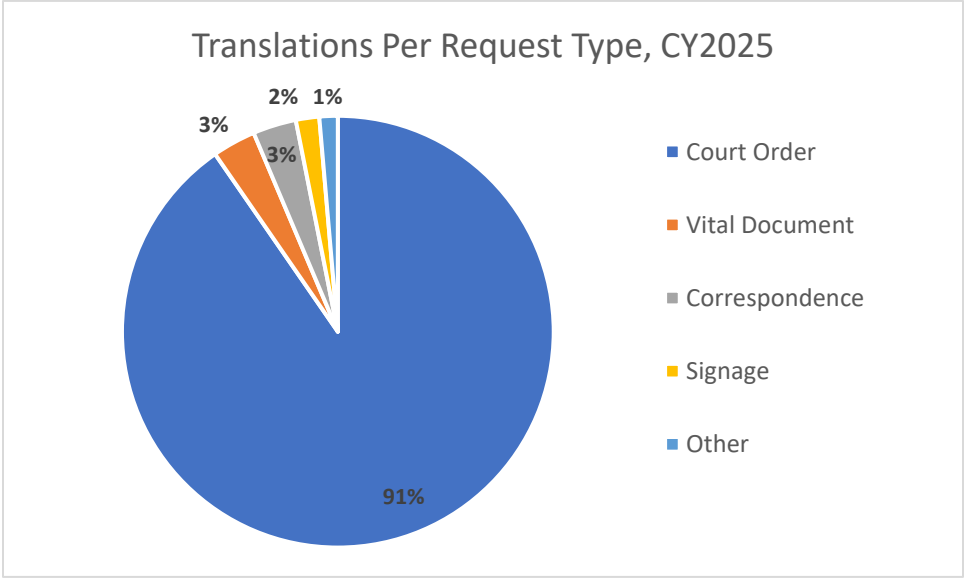
Document translation requests from the Family Court Operations Division accounted for approximately 78% of all requests, followed by the Domestic Violence Division, Civil Division, and other divisions:<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Translations render a message from a written language text into another written language text.

<sup>19</sup> Other offices that requested translations were the Multi-Door Dispute Resolution Division at 2% of all translation requests, followed by Probate Division, Criminal Division, Capital Projects and Facilities Management Division, Crime Victims Compensation Program, Office of the Clerk of the Superior Court, Special Operations Division, Court Social Services Division, the Court of Appeals, and Budget and Finance Division, each at less than 2% of all translation requests.

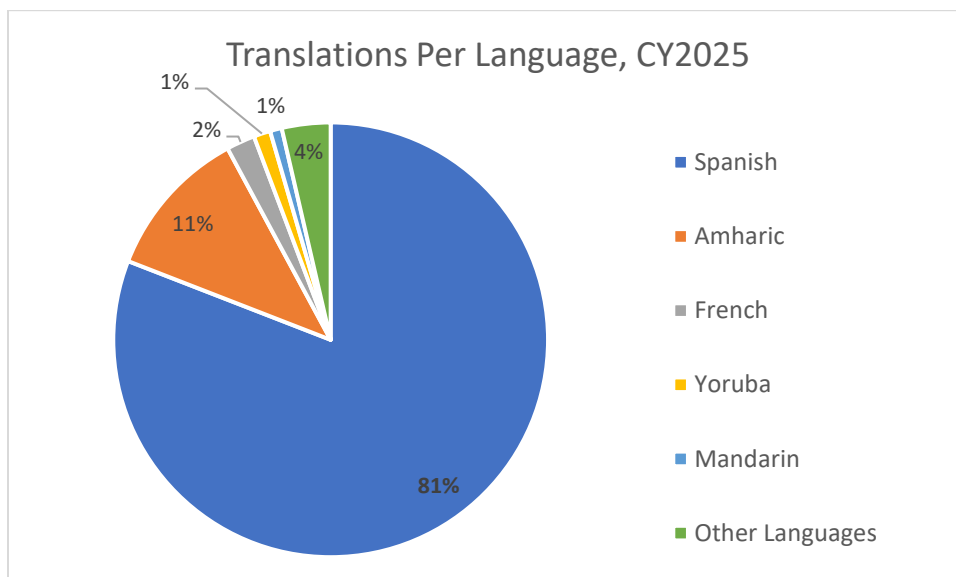


Requests for translations of court orders accounted for approximately 90% of all translation requests, followed by vital documents (e.g., applications, forms, and notices), correspondence, signage, and other documents:



In 2025, OCIS received requests for document translations in 20 languages. Spanish and Amharic remain the top two most requested languages for document translations at the Courts

at 80.9% and 11.2% of all requests respectively, followed by French and other languages.<sup>20</sup>



#### IV. INTERPRETER REGISTRY

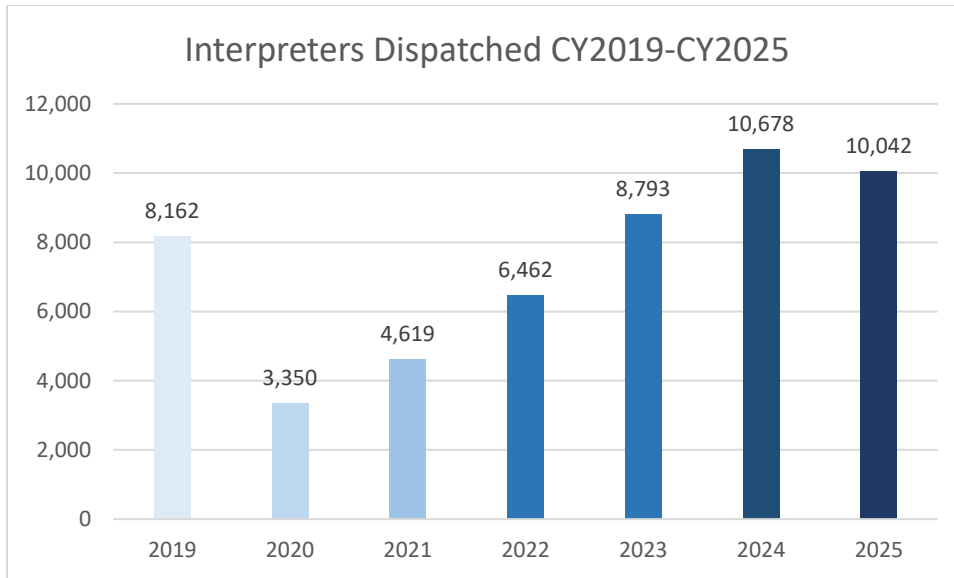
The DC Courts' Interpreter Registry, launched in 2019, is a formal court interpreter testing and training program designed to improve the quality of interpretation services at the Courts by standardizing interpreter testing, training, responsibilities, and scheduling.

In 2025, the Interpreter Registry increased to 217 contract interpreters from 205 in 2024, representing over 60 spoken and signed languages. OCIS manages the Interpreter Registry and coordinates the activities of the contract interpreters to fulfill the Courts' daily needs for interpretation services.

In 2025, OCIS assigned interpreters on 10,042<sup>21</sup> occasions to fulfill 8,966 requests for interpretation services in 57 distinct languages. This amounts to a decrease of 6% in the number of interpreter assignments compared to 10,678 in 2024.

<sup>20</sup> Other languages were Yoruba, at approximately 2% of all translations, followed by Mandarin, Arabic, Tagalog, Creole (Haitian), Italian, Tigrinya, Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Creole (English), Oromo, Cantonese, Russian, Hindi, Portuguese, and Korean, each at less than 1% of all translations.

<sup>21</sup> Two interpreters are assigned as a team to interpret for lengthy proceedings.



## V. TESTING AND TRAINING SERVICES

OCIS offers comprehensive testing and training services to ensure that court staff, judicial officers, and contract interpreters are well-versed in the Courts' language access program and services. These efforts are designed to promote consistent, high-quality service delivery and support meaningful access for LEP and deaf court users. In 2025, OCIS facilitated the presentation of 44 workshops and training sessions for Interpreter Registry members, judicial officers, court employees, and law clerks and administered 9 linguistic proficiency exams to prospective interpreters and Spanish-speaking panel attorneys.

### A. DC Courts' Interpreter Registry

All Interpreter Registry members are required to complete an orientation workshop during their onboarding process that covers the role of the court interpreter, remote interpretation, ethics, practice standards and code of conduct, court procedures and protocols, the Web Interpreter and Translator System, and OCIS policies. To remain in good standing, interpreters on the Interpreter Registry must complete 12 hours of continuing education every two years on legal or interpretation matters. In 2025, OCIS facilitated 34 training sessions and workshops for Interpreter Registry members. A total of 158 Registry members attended, some of whom participated in multiple training sessions. In 2025, OCIS also administered language

proficiency exams to 8 candidates applying to join the Interpreter Registry.

**B. Judicial Officers**

Annually and upon request, the Language Access Coordinator provides an overview of the language access program and best practices for working with interpreters to all new judges during their on-boarding sessions. In 2025, the Language Access Coordinator conducted two training sessions for two new judges.

**C. Court Employees and Law Clerks**

The Language Access Advisory Committee developed a training presentation called *Identifying Language Needs and Providing Language Assistance Services in a Court Setting*, which the Courts implemented in 2019. This mandatory training has been incorporated into the on-boarding of all new employees at the Courts and provides an overview of the Courts' language access program, the role of an interpreter, best practices for working with an interpreter in person or remotely, and how to coordinate interpretation services with OCIS. In 2025, OCIS conducted four such training sessions for 61 employees, as well as one training session for approximately 30 new law clerks. OCIS also hosted one training session for court employees on how to use Language Line and one training session on how to provide excellent customer service to deaf court users. OCIS also offered one presentation to international visitors on the importance of language access in court operations.

**D. Spanish-Speaking Panel Attorneys**

Under certain circumstances, the Courts appoint attorneys to represent clients in defending their matters. Some attorneys serve Spanish-speaking parties. In order to ensure that the attorneys are sufficiently proficient in Spanish, the Language Access Coordinator administers a linguistic proficiency exam to prospective Spanish-speaking panel attorneys. In 2025, OCIS administered one exam to one Spanish-speaking CJA (Criminal Justice Act) panel attorney.

## **VI. LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCES**

In 2025, OCIS launched its upgraded data management system, the Web Interpreter and Translator System. The OCIS Program Officer collects and analyzes interpretation and translation data in monthly, quarterly, fiscal-year, and calendar-year reports to produce a detailed needs assessment tool. The data is utilized by the Language Access Coordinator, the Management and Program Analyst, and the Special Operations Division Director for quality control, hiring practices, budget requests, and recommendations to internal stakeholders based on data patterns and trends.

In 2025, language access tools and information about the language access program were updated and maintained for use by the public and the Courts' internal stakeholders through printed material, digital platforms, and multimedia content.

A Language Access tab that was added to the DC Courts' website at <https://www.dccourts.gov/ada-and-language-accessibility#language-access> continued to provide an overview of the Courts' language access services for the public, attorneys, and interpreters. The webpage is designed to provide access to language access tools as well as targeted information for the public, attorneys, and interpreters.

An OCIS Language Access Toolkit was designed and updated for internal stakeholders and remained published and updated on the Courts' intranet. The OCIS toolkit is a one-stop resource for judicial officers, law clerks, and court personnel that provides information on the language access program and the tools for obtaining language access services.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

In accordance with its mission to provide meaningful access to justice for all, OCIS continued to innovate in 2025. OCIS maintained a hybrid service model for staff and contract interpreters to provide both remote and onsite services. OCIS maintained three video remote interpreting rooms for onsite interpreters to utilize when assigned to remote hearings.

In 2025, the demand for interpretation services decreased by 1% (8,966 events) compared to 2024 (9,073 events). Translation requests decreased by 6% between 2024 (854 document translations) and 2025 (801 document translations). OCIS anticipates that demand

will remain steady as the Superior Court of the District of Columbia improves court forms and other information to benefit court users, including LEP persons.

To meet the demands for language access services, additional full-time employee positions are needed to provide interpretation and translation services, perform translation quality review, administer certification and qualification exams, design and offer language access and skills-building training sessions, recruit contract interpreters, and provide administrative and programmatic support.

Contract interpreters are in high demand in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, and OCIS competes directly with local agencies, such as the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and neighboring state and federal court systems, for the services of contract interpreters. To attract and retain contract interpreters to the DC Courts' Interpreter Registry and ensure their continued availability, additional funding is needed to align base payment rates, as well as mileage, parking, and other payments, with DC market conditions and local competitor agencies.

In 2026, OCIS will continue to focus on setting up additional VRI rooms within the courthouse. In addition, OCIS will continue to offer training sessions, utilize best practices, leverage technology, and collaborate with stakeholders to provide a high standard of language access services.

## Appendix A

Number of Interpretation Requests Fulfilled Per Language		
Language	Number of Requests	Percentage
Spanish	6,260	69.82%
Amharic	726	8.10%
Deaf - American Sign Language (ASL)	694	7.74%
Arabic	201	2.24%
French	175	1.95%
Russian	112	1.25%
Deaf - Relay	83	0.93%
Mandarin	78	0.87%
Korean	69	0.77%
Vietnamese	64	0.71%
Tigrinya	64	0.71%
Persian	41	0.46%
Portuguese	33	0.37%
Turkish	28	0.31%
Bengali	27	0.30%
Creole (English)	26	0.29%
Nepali	25	0.28%
Georgian	22	0.25%
Creole (Haitian)	21	0.23%
Tagalog	18	0.20%
Yoruba	17	0.19%
Oromo	16	0.18%
Arabic (Moroccan)	14	0.16%
Hindi	13	0.14%
Japanese	10	0.11%
Wolof	10	0.11%
Bosnian	10	0.11%
Cantonese	8	0.09%
Moghamo	8	0.09%
Dari	7	0.08%
Polish	7	0.08%
Urdu	7	0.08%
Thai	6	0.07%
Italian	5	0.06%
Mongolian	5	0.06%

Twi	5	0.06%
Malayalam	5	0.06%
Gujarati	5	0.06%
Patois	5	0.06%
Somali	4	0.04%
Pashto	4	0.04%
Lao	3	0.03%
German	3	0.03%
Punjabi	3	0.03%
Hadiya	2	0.02%
Hebrew	2	0.02%
Bassa	2	0.02%
Bulgarian	2	0.02%
Akan	2	0.02%
Pashtu	2	0.02%
Cambodian	1	0.01%
Kinyarwanda	1	0.01%
Armenian	1	0.01%
Swahili	1	0.01%
Samoan	1	0.01%
Croatian	1	0.01%
Indonesian	1	0.01%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>8,966</b>	<b>100.00%</b>