



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUPERIOR COURT
Special Operations Division
Office of Court Interpreting Services**

Code of Ethics for Court Interpreters

This document was developed under grant number SJI-19-N-037 from the State Justice Institute. The points of view expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.



Preamble

The District of Columbia Courts is committed to providing all individuals full linguistic presence in the Courts to ensure fair treatment, participation and access to justice. Court interpreters are key components in court matters where limited English proficiency and deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals require access to justice. The function of court interpreters is to remove the language barrier to the extent possible, such that a person's access to justice is the same as that of similarly-situated English speakers for whom no such barrier exists. This Code of Ethics encompasses spoken and sign languages. Contract court interpreters are expected to follow the District of Columbia Courts' Interpreter Code of Ethics in all their dealings with judicial officers, court personnel, parties and attorneys.

Canon 1: Qualifications

Court interpreters will accurately represent their certifications, training and pertinent experience.

Canon 2: Accuracy

Interpreters will faithfully and accurately render a full and complete interpretation of all testimony and statements for all in-court and out-of-court matters. The interpretation must preserve the level of language used without altering, omitting or adding anything to what is stated or written, and without explanation.

Canon 3: Conflict of Interest & Impartiality

Interpreters are to remain impartial and neutral in proceedings where they serve and must maintain the appearance of impartiality and neutrality, avoiding unnecessary contact with the parties.

Interpreters must disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest and shall avoid an appearance of impropriety and conflict of interest in the matter both in and out-of-court. The interpreters must have no personal interest in the outcome of the case.

Canon 4: Duty to report inaccuracies

Interpreters will correct any and all errors of interpretation discovered during the proceeding, immediately or as soon as the error is identified.

Canon 5: No Advocacy/Legal Advice

Interpreters will limit their participation in those matters in which they serve to interpreting and must not advocate on behalf of the parties, must not give advice to the parties or otherwise engage in activities that could be construed as the practice of law.

Canon 6: Confidentiality

Interpreters will not disclose without authorization privileged or confidential information acquired both in and out-of-court.

Canon 7: Restriction on Public Comment

Interpreters must not publicly discuss, report or offer an opinion concerning a matter in which they are or have been engaged. No activities or comments related to court matters may be shared, discussed, posted or otherwise provided through or on any social media, including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr, Pinterest, YouTube or WhatsApp before, during and after all interpretation in and out-of-court.

Canon 8: Dignity of the Court

Interpreters must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards and protocol of the court and will perform their duties as unobtrusively as possible.

Canon 9: No remuneration

Interpreters will accept remuneration for their service to the court only from the court. Interpreters will not accept any real or perceived gifts, gratuities or valuable consideration from any litigant, witness or attorney in a case where the interpreter is serving.

Canon 10: Impediments to Compliance with Code of Ethics

Interpreters will bring to the attention of the appropriate judicial authority any circumstance or condition that impedes full compliance with any canon of this code, including their ability to satisfy an assignment competently. This includes interpreter fatigue, inability to hear or inadequate knowledge of specialized terminology.