

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

FROM: Judge David Hejmanowski, Chairperson
Bruno Romero, Manager of the Language Services Section

CC: Stephanie Hess, Interim Administrative Director
Stephanie Nelson, Director of Court Services Division

DATE: December 30, 2021

RE: **Advisory Committee on Language Services – 2021 Annual Report**

Pursuant to Guideline 4.03 of the Operating Guidelines for the Advisory Committee on Language Services, Judge David Hejmanowski, chairperson and Bruno Romero, staff liaison to the Advisory Committee on Language Services (Advisory Committee), hereby submit the 2021 Annual Report.

Purpose of Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide ongoing advice to the Court and its staff regarding the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards on the operation of language access programs in Ohio courts; the development and delivery of interpreter services to Ohio courts, including training programs for judges and court personnel; and the consideration of any other issues the Advisory Committee deems necessary to assist the Court and its staff regarding the provision of language services in Ohio courts.

2021 Activities and Accomplishments

The Advisory Committee met via Zoom on March 19, August 27, and December 10. The Advisory Committee continued to build on past contributions and identified new areas of contribution.

First, the Advisory Committee assisted in the completion of a bench card to guide courts on the use of foreign language interpreters in a case or court function and a separate bench card on working with sign language interpreters. These two bench cards were added to three previously produced bench cards that were produced in 2020. Next, the Advisory Committee

finalized a proposed court interpreter disciplinary procedure to address any violations of the Code of Professional Conduct for Court Interpreters and Translators which may be used by the Language Services Section to address disciplinary matters. Finally, the Advisory Committee completed a one-hour webinar curriculum on Sup.R.88 that may be delivered to local courts through instructor-led webinars. The webinar will be offer on January 28, and mid-March of 2022.

The Advisory Committee examined the advantages and disadvantages of expanding telephonic interpreting services to include video remote interpreting (VRI). The Advisory Committee paid special attention to the differences between VRI for foreign language speakers and deaf individuals. After weighing the costs and benefits of expansion, the Advisory Committee took the steps to propose standards for the use of VRI. These standards will be included in the amendments to the Rules of Superintendence in 2022. This first step will set the foundation for VRI utilization whether the Supreme Court decides to expand telephonic interpreting to include VRI or the local court decide to implement this service on their own.

Furthermore, at its last meeting, the Advisory Committee finalized proposed amendments to Sup.R. 80-89. They include mostly narrow changes and two new sections. The amendments range from defining “video remote interpreting” to striking the language that limits the number of continuing education credits that an interpreter can earn via distance learning. The predominant change includes asking each court to adopt a Language Access Plan (LAP). It is a compulsory element of the United States Department of Justice on language access compliance. A model plan has been updated and posted on the Language Services webpage for the convenience of the courts. Modification of the plan is easy and straightforward. The final section to the amendments includes “Standards for the Use of Video Remote Interpretation,” which were discussed above.

On the training front, the Language Services Section hosted several sign language courses to allow ASL interpreters to complete the requirements to become “registered” and be listed as such on the Supreme Court’s roster. Programs offered were the following: Ethics for ASL Interpreters, April 23 and 30, and September 17 and 24; Legal Procedure and Terminology for ASL Interpreters, January 15 and 22, and December 3 and 10; Modes of Interpretation for ASL, July 16 and 23.

The Section also continued to offer training for foreign language interpreters. The Section offered: Legal Procedure and Terminology, February 20, November 19 and 20; Introduction to Court Interpretation, March 20, Orientation Training for Written Exam Candidates, May 14 and 15, and December 3 and 4; Court Interpreters Ethics, September 11; and Metaethics for Roster Interpreters, December 10.

The Section also provided technical support to approximately 60 courts assisting fielding in approximately 90 requests. The section also managed 7 court and 2 interpreter complaints.

Finally, the Section offered the written exam for the first time in 18 months. The test was offered to sign language interpreters. All ten interpreters who took the test passed it at 80 percent or better. The passing rate for foreign language interpreters is approximately 50 percent.

The Advisory Committee on Language Services and the Language Services Section will continue to work together to strengthen access to justice for every limited-English, and deaf and hard of hearing person in Ohio.