

Interpreting Services FAQs

1) Who is entitled to a court interpreter?

Any criminal defendant charged with a crime by the United States who does not have adequate command of the English language is entitled to an interpreter. Through the interpreter, the defendant can fully participate in proceedings and in building a proper defense.

2) When are court interpreters provided by the Court used?

Court interpreters provided by the Court are responsible for interpreting proceedings in the courtroom. They are provided to serve the Court and the defendant in the courtroom, specifically, although they may help attorneys speak to their clients briefly before or after a hearing if the schedule allows.

3) Who is responsible for locating/assigning an interpreter?

The Director of Interpreting Services/Staff Interpreter locates, contacts, and contracts all interpreters needed once the request has been entered on the Interpreter Request Database by a courtroom deputy. The courtroom deputy is responsible for requesting the interpreting services needed and keeping Interpreting Services informed of any modification or cancellation of the request. If the request for interpreting services is not entered in a timely fashion by the courtroom deputy, there is a possibility that an interpreter will not be available at the time needed.

4) What if an attorney needs to go over a plea agreement with a client, but needs an interpreter?

Any attorney needing the services of an interpreter to review a plea agreement with a client or other visits to the jail, must contract the interpreter under the Criminal Justice Act with the approval of the judge.

5) What happens when an interpreter is needed for a civil case?

Interpreters are provided for civil cases when the judicial proceeding is instituted by the United States. Otherwise, the parties involved are responsible for contracting their own interpreters.

6) What about sign language cases?

Sign language interpreting services are provided for both criminal and civil cases when any party involved in the case is deaf or hard of hearing and requires such services. If something other than sign language interpreting is required, every effort will be made to provide some other reasonable accommodation.

7) Who is qualified to be an interpreter?

By statute, Federally Certified Court Interpreters must be used in cases requiring Spanish interpretation. For all other languages, the Court is bound to provide the most qualified interpreters available, be they Professionally Qualified or Language-skilled.