

# Overview of the ORAL EXAMINATION For Prospective Court Interpreters

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The Court Interpreter Approval Program exists to meet the needs of the New Jersey Judiciary. Accordingly, persons are eligible to enter the program if they reside in or near enough to New Jersey to provide interpreting services to New Jersey's courts on a regular basis or if they are in the process of moving to New Jersey and intend to regularly work as a court interpreter in New Jersey. Persons who reside at great distances from New Jersey are generally ineligible.

Persons who are already certified by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts need not take any additional examinations. Reciprocity is available to persons certified in other states so long as the test by which they were certified is a test developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). For further information on reciprocity, see the [reciprocity policy](#) available on our website.

***Candidates are responsible for becoming familiar with the Court Interpreter Approval Program's policies. Please read this document carefully as it provides a complete description of the testing policies that apply to all candidates.***

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## Keys to Success

### What are the keys to success in the court interpreting profession?

Court interpreting is a sophisticated and demanding profession that requires much more than having some knowledge of two languages. First, one must be *extraordinarily bilingual*, possessing a highly educated, native-like ability in **both** English and a second language. In addition, one must have the *professional skills* to interpret in the profession's three modes of interpretation: sight, consecutive, and simultaneous. The profession requires *uncommon personal qualities*: mental, physical, and emotional stamina.

In addition, one must have extensive knowledge of *legal terminology* in English and the second language, as well as *court procedures and protocol*. Since most people who take the tests do not possess the skills, knowledge, or the noted personal qualities, the vast majority (89%) of persons who take a court interpreter oral examination in New Jersey fail it. **Do not allow yourself to believe that because you are "bilingual" you are likely to pass this professional exam without a lot of professional preparation.**

In order to enhance a candidate's chances at successfully entering the court interpreting profession, prospective interpreters are encouraged to use the following keys to success:

1. **Read everything in the oral exam overview document carefully and follow its suggestions.**
2. **Read the broadest array of subjects possible in both languages in many forms** (e.g., fiction and non-fiction books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites) to expand your general vocabulary. Take literature courses in both languages.
3. **Obtain professional training** in the three modes of court interpreting -- especially simultaneous -- from a college or university or on-line. A list of known courses (including on-line courses) and other resources is available at [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#).
4. Obtain practice materials from any of numerous sources and **practice, practice, practice** all three modes of interpreting, **especially simultaneous**. A list of known courses and other resources is available at [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#).
5. **Observe a wide array of different types of court proceedings**, both those that are interpreted (to observe how professional interpreters conduct themselves) and those that are not interpreted (to learn legal terminology, courtroom protocol, etc.). See the [Directory of Contacts](#) on the website ("General Information" section) for contact persons through whom observations of court proceedings can be arranged.
6. **Obtain and study thoroughly at least one classic textbook on court interpreting.** A list of books and other resources is available at [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#).
7. **Obtain at least one bilingual (English and your second language) legal dictionary or glossary (see website for list) and learn the most frequent legal terms in both English and your second language, as well as their respective equivalents.** If no dictionary or glossary is available, use the master list of legal terms available at [Resources for Professional Development of Court Interpreters](#) or [National Center for State Courts](#) (NCSC) and develop your own glossary.
8. **Join at least one professional association of court interpreters, read its publications and attend its conferences.**

## Overview of the Process

The outline below provides an overview of the process that candidates will follow. All exams are given at the Administrative Office of the Courts, Trenton, NJ. **Only candidates from New Jersey and neighboring states are eligible to test in New Jersey.**

1. **Pass the Written Exam:** This exam is a test to determine whether prospective court interpreters possess sufficient knowledge of the English language, professional ethics for court interpreting, and legal terms and court procedures.
2. **Complete the Orientation Seminar:** These seminars are offered three times a year at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Trenton.
3. **Pass the Oral Exam:** Persons who successfully take the written examination and have completed the Orientation Seminar are eligible to proceed to the oral exam. Submit an oral exam application and accompanying fee to take the court interpreting oral exam. You must fill out the application and mail it in, along with payment, whenever you feel you are ready to take the oral exam. **You will be notified via e-mail** of which oral exam testing session you will be a part of. First-time and repeat candidates should be guided by the recommendations in the Oral Exam Fee Policy below when determining the appropriate oral exam fee.
4. **Having successfully completed requirements 1-3, execute a contract with the Judiciary and submit pertinent registration forms.** Persons who successfully complete requirements 1-3 above will be sent, along with the final notice of exam results, via e-mail an invitation to register with all the pertinent information, including:
  - Instructions for registering with the New Jersey Division of Revenue.
  - Instructions for registering on-line with NJ START.
  - A registration form to be listed in the [New Jersey Judiciary Registry of Interpreting Resources \(Registry\)](#).
  - A contract known as the Professional Service Statement of Work (PSSW) Proposal.

Once all of these forms have been submitted and completed, and once the Judiciary confirms that the candidate has registered with the Division of Revenue and NJSTART, the interpreter will be entered into the *Registry* and thereafter becomes eligible to work on a contract basis.

**Typically, anyone who scores at the conditionally-approved level will be required to retake those sections of the oral exam that were not passed within two years of completing the test process or they may be removed from the *Registry*.** Conditionally-approved interpreters may register and work as contract interpreters during this “trainee period,” but the presumption is they must test up to a passing level of Journey or Master within two years or they will lose their eligibility to work in Superior Court and will no longer be listed in the *Registry*. Conditionally-approved interpreters should see the Resources for Professional Development document posted on our website for ideas on improving knowledge, skills, and abilities.

## **Exam Fee Policy**

**The following policy and fee schedule applies to all candidates taking a court interpreting oral exam, except as provided below. Terms are subject to change without advance notice.**

### **Eligibility**

**All candidates are strongly urged to read this entire document carefully and complete the application at the end of this document. Only candidates from New Jersey and neighboring states are eligible to test in New Jersey.**

First-time candidates who successfully take the written exam and complete the orientation seminar (prerequisites) are eligible to take the oral exam. Repeat candidates who previously took an oral exam and failed, failed but reached the conditionally-approved level or reached the Journey level and have waited at least one year since their last oral exam, are eligible to retest. **Fees apply each time you take an oral exam.**

### **Oral Exam Fee Policy**

When eligible and ready to take the oral exam, first-time and repeat candidates should be guided by the recommendations below when determining the appropriate oral exam fee. The oral exam fee (Rate A or Rate B) is due upon application. Fees represent the costs associated with rating the oral exams. Fees are subject to change at any time. Check the website periodically for updates. **All Judiciary employees are exempt from fees.**

Language	Rate A 1 to 2 Exam Sections	Rate B 3 Sections (Full Exam)
ALL Languages	\$240	\$375

### **First-time Candidates With No Interpretation/Translation Education**

- It is recommended that first-time candidates with no interpretation/translation education take the oral exam in two phases, taking the simultaneous section first (pay Rate A) and, if they reach a score of 50 percent or higher, returning at a later date to take the sight and consecutive sections (pay Rate A again). **Fees apply each time you test.**
  - Anyone who scores 50 percent or higher can continue testing and will be provided instructions on how to do so in their test results letter. These candidates must pay Rate A again to complete testing.
  - Anyone who scores below 50 percent in the simultaneous section will be required to take one or more pertinent courses before being allowed to submit an application to retake the simultaneous section, and must pay Rate A again.
- Candidates from distant locations planning to relocate and work in New Jersey may also apply to take a full exam after completing prerequisites.

### **First-time Candidates With Interpretation/Translation Education**

- It is recommended that first-time candidates who meet any of the following requirements take a full exam since the probability of passing the exam may be higher.
  - Candidates who have completed a program of study in interpretation/translation, such as a Certificate in Court Interpretation from Hunter College or NYU, or the M.A. in Spanish Translation from Rutgers University.
  - Candidates certified by states for which New Jersey does not grant reciprocity [i.e., California (if certified prior to 2011), Massachusetts and New York] or other entities (i.e., NAJIT)].

## **Repeat Candidates**

**(NOTE: All repeat candidates must wait at least one year before retesting.)**

- Repeat candidates pay either Rate A or Rate B, depending on what exam sections they need to take again. Repeat candidates will be scheduled to take all sections not passed on the same date. Repeat candidates who have not passed one or two sections should pay Rate A. Repeat candidates who have not passed any of the sections should pay Rate B and take the full exam.
- Typically, repeat candidates who scored at the conditionally-approved level will be required to retake those sections of the test that were not passed within two years of completing the testing process and must pay the applicable oral exam fee. **Candidates who do not retake failed sections within the two-year time limit will need to retake all sections of the exam.**

## **Full and Abbreviated Oral Exams**

Oral exams are either full or abbreviated. Full oral exams have three sections, one for each mode of court interpreting: sight, consecutive and simultaneous. Abbreviated exams have a simultaneous section only. See Page 7 for a complete listing of full and abbreviated exams.

- Candidates taking the **Arabic** exam should read [Becoming an Arabic Court Interpreter](#) for further details. **Please note that the Arabic-Levantine oral exam is now available.**

## **Oral Exam Application and Fee Processing**

Candidates must mail a completed **application found at the end of this document** and the accompanying fee, which is payable by check, certified check or money order, to “Treasurer, State of New Jersey.” Absolutely no cash payments will be accepted. We will confirm receipt of your application and payment **via e-mail. All communication regarding the oral exams is done through e-mail only.**

- Applications will be shredded if they are not submitted with payment. Checks cannot be post-dated and will be deposited upon receipt.
- Mail applications and accompanying fees to:

**Regular Mail (US Postal Service)**  
Language Services  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
PO Box 988  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

**Overnight/Express Mail**  
Language Services  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex  
25 Market Street  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

## Oral Exam Fee Exceptions

- **All Judiciary employees are exempt from paying any fees.** Please note that all first-time Judiciary employees will be tested in a bifurcated manner, which means they will take the simultaneous section of the exam first and, if they score at the conditionally-approved level or higher, will be eligible to then take the sight and consecutive sections during our next oral exam testing session.

## Refund Policy

- If you do not let us know whether or not you can make the time and date stated in your oral exam appointment letter, we will assume you are no longer interested in testing, shred your application, and issue a refund to the address on file. However, if you miss your exam appointment and do not contact us to say whether or not you want to be rescheduled, you will be sent a refund **minus a \$25 administration fee.**
- If your check is returned for insufficient funds, you will not be allowed to take the exam until the Judiciary receives full payment. If your check is returned for insufficient funds and you have already taken the exam, the Judiciary will not grade your exam or give you the results until the Judiciary receives full payment.
- **If you have questions, please feel free to contact us at:**  
[Langsvcs.mailbox@njcourts.gov](mailto:Langsvcs.mailbox@njcourts.gov)  
Phone: 609-815-2900, x52376



## **Introduction**

In 1982, Chief Justice Robert N. Wilentz appointed the Supreme Court Task Force on Interpreter and Translation Services to review the availability and adequacy of services delivered to linguistic minorities by the Judiciary. In its 1985 final report to the Chief Justice, the Task Force reported: "Existing procedures for establishing qualifications are inadequate for court interpreters in the foreign languages...." The Task Force had found that procedures developed both by the Department of Civil Service (since renamed Department of Personnel) and local court administrators did not identify persons who were fully qualified to serve as staff court interpreters. The Task Force reported further that there were no procedures at all for qualifying free-lance interpreters. In 1992, the Supreme Court Task Force on Minority Concerns reiterated the inadequacy of interpreting and other services necessary for providing equal access to courts for linguistic minorities.

This overview is given to every person who wishes to become an approved court interpreter and deliver court interpreting services for the New Jersey Judiciary. The goal is to help examinees do their best on the exam by:

- a) making them aware of the nature and purposes of the test;
- b) apprising them of the knowledge, skills and abilities required of court interpreters, some of which are measured on this test;
- c) advising them of what it will be like when they come to take the test;
- d) giving suggestions on how to prepare, and
- e) providing specific hints of "dos and don'ts" to follow while taking the test.

## **Policy**

Since October 1987 (Directive #07-87), it has been the policy of the Judiciary that: (1) every applicant for a full-time court interpreting position in the Superior or a Municipal Court (except for positions in the classified services, which have since been eliminated) must be tested and approved by the Language Services Section (LSS) of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to be eligible for such positions; and (2) every other new employee anywhere in the Superior Court or a Municipal Court who is expected to interpret for litigants who do not speak English must be approved by the LSS before being allowed to interpret. Since this policy was not retroactive, it was not binding on existing employees of the courts who were interpreting as of October 1987 (except that appointing authorities are strongly urged to have their existing staff evaluated), and did not apply to freelance interpreters at that time.

Through the *Guidelines for Contracting Freelance Interpreters in the Superior Court* approved by the Chief Justice and Assignment Judges in March 1995, the policy of requiring interpreters to meet minimum performance standards was extended to contract court interpreters. Any interpreter or agency that wishes to work on a contractual basis for the Judiciary must register with the LSS of the AOC. The *Guidelines* were rescinded in the early 2000s and replaced in 2004 by the *Standards for Delivering Court Interpreting Services in the New Jersey Judiciary*. The *Standards* required that interpreters provided by agencies are subject to the same professional requirements. In January 2017, the New Jersey Judiciary promulgated the Language Access Plan (Directive #01-17) which incorporated into one single document all existing language access policies including Directive #3-04.

Technically speaking the examination is not a "certification" examination and those who pass the exam are called "approved" not "certified" in New Jersey. However, it is functionally equivalent to the court interpreter certification exams administered by most states that are members of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

The New Jersey Judiciary was a founding member of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts when it began in June 1995. Since that time until 2012, the New Jersey Judiciary used tests developed by teams of experts coordinated by the Consortium in addition to tests developed by the New Jersey Judiciary. In 2012, the NCSC assumed full responsibility for all exam maintenance and development.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Exam***

### **1. What does the test measure?**

The content of the test is based on an analysis of what a court interpreter must be able to do. That analysis is based on what staff court interpreters have historically known and done, that they must still know and do, the Judiciary's policy about what staff court interpreters should know and do, professional standards established by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), and the pertinent literature in the field. The test measures the ability to transfer all meaning faithfully from English to the second language and from the second language to English while interpreting in the sight and consecutive modes, and from English to the second language in the simultaneous mode. For a detailed listing of the knowledge, skills and abilities court interpreters must have, see Appendix A.

### **2. What are the sections of each test?**

**Full tests:** A complete test has three sections: sight (which has two parts: English → second language, second language → English), consecutive, and simultaneous. These are the three modes of interpreting that all court interpreters must be able to perform. All three sections of the test are based on real cases and simulate, in many respects, the real world of court interpreting.

**Abbreviated tests:** Ideally, the tests in all languages would include all three sections in the traditional, full-test model. However, limited resources make it impossible to develop and administer valid and reliable exams that include all sections in all languages. Accordingly, abbreviated tests have been developed in some languages. These abbreviated exams always include the simultaneous section, but some include one or both sight parts. The results of all abbreviated tests are considered to be “provisional.” This means that the results are not permanent. If full tests are ever developed in a given language utilizing an abbreviated test, then the candidates who qualified on the abbreviated test will have to take the new test sections to obtain a final, permanent outcome.

See the table below for a listing of the sections administered by language.

**Test Sections Being Administered By Language**

Language	Sight		Consecutive	Simultaneous
	Into English	From English		
Arabic, Egyptian Colloquial	No	No	Yes	No
Arabic, Levantine Colloquial	No	No	Yes	No
Arabic, Modern Standard	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian	No	No	No	Yes
Cantonese	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chuukese	No	No	No	Yes
Filipino (Tagalog)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
French	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Haitian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hmong	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ilocano	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Korean	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laotian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandarin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Language	Sight		Consecutive	Simultaneous
	Into English	From English		
Marshallese	No	No	No	Yes
Polish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portuguese	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Russian	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Somali	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spanish	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Turkish	No	No	No	Yes
Vietnamese	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**3. What do I need to do to be eligible to take the test?**

First-time candidates must:

- A. Take and score at least 70% on the written test.
- B. Attend the Orientation Seminar.
- C. Fill out and mail in an application to the LSS, along with payment. **Applicants who move after submitting an application and before being tested should advise the LSS of the change in address immediately via e-mail at [LangSvc mailbox@njcourts.gov](mailto:LangSvc mailbox@njcourts.gov).**

Repeat candidates who scored below 50% on any section or below 55% across all sections of the oral exam must:

- A. Wait 12 months to take the test again.
- B. Complete, with a grade of B or better, a three-credit college course at least half of which focuses on the simultaneous mode of interpretation or an equivalent on-line course approved by LSS;
- C. Provide proof of having completed the course and the grade earned by submitting either the original notice of grade from the college/university or an original transcript issued by the college/university or certificate of completion of the on-line course; and
- D. Submit a new application and fee.

Repeat candidates who have reached the Journey level and wish to attain the Master level must:

- A. Wait 12 months to take the test again; and
- B. Submit a new oral exam application and applicable fee any time within the last few months of that year of ineligibility.

**4. How many applications should I submit?**

**One application for each language.** For example, if you wish to take both Portuguese and Spanish, you must fill out a separate application for each and enclose the applicable fee for each.

**5. When should I submit an application?**

**When you are eligible and ready to be tested!** Candidates should submit an oral exam application and fee only when they are both eligible and **ready to be tested**. Candidates are eligible for the oral exam only after scoring a 70% or better on the written exam and attending an Orientation Seminar. Candidates who are retesting should refer to their original test result letter for any additional requirements for retesting.

**6. What can I do to prepare for the test? I've heard that it's extremely difficult and very few people pass it!**

While the actual passing rate for tests that have all three sections ranges from 0% to 21%, when all candidates who have taken a test in any of the languages tested are combined, only 12% of the candidates pass the exam. For more detailed and comprehensive statistics on passing rates by language, see the data posted on our website. As to whether the test itself is difficult, that depends on the degree to which you have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the duties of a court interpreter and can successfully demonstrate them when you take the test. In other words, if you are well prepared, you will have no difficulty passing. However, the truth is that a vast majority of candidates overestimate their knowledge, skills and abilities and underestimate how challenging the work of a court interpreter is. The bottom line is that the average candidate who has historically taken the test is not prepared to take it.

Twenty-seven years of testing experience provide data that shows two important points. First, **candidates, regardless of language, experience the simultaneous section of the exam to be the most difficult mode of interpretation**. The following table compiled from the court interpreter oral exam database maintained by the New Jersey Judiciary, from the inception of the testing program in 1987 through December 2016, illustrates this<sup>1</sup>:

Language <sup>2</sup>	Average Score And % of Candidates Scoring 70% or Higher on Each Test Section					
	Sight		Consecutive		Simultaneous	
	Average Score	% at 70%+	Average Score	% at 70%+	Average Score	% at 70%+
Arabic, Modern Standard	58	23	Not applicable		34	3
French	73	54	65	37	41	10
Haitian Creole	71	56	62	28	45	10
Italian	85	95	75	71	50	10
Korean	62	26	67	43	41	5
Mandarin	72	76	66	36	43	10
Polish	83	90	75	78	42	17
Portuguese	80	76	69	54	47	18
Russian	76	76	71	56	48	11
Spanish	61	39	59	29	42	13
Vietnamese	54	22	59	33	31	4

***The most obvious implication for candidates is that you really need to develop your simultaneous interpreting skills to prepare for the simultaneous section of the exam. For most candidates, learning to perform simultaneous interpreting takes much more time and effort than mastering the sight and consecutive modes of interpretation.***

<sup>1</sup> This is also born out in other states as well as the Federal court interpreter certification programs. See Wanda Romberger, *Skills Training for Foreign-Language Court Interpreters: Does It Increase the Number of Qualified Interpreters?* at 23.

<sup>2</sup> New Jersey tests in other languages besides these, but statistics for languages for which there is only an abbreviated exam or have less than 15 examinees are not reported here.

Second, **simultaneous interpretation is indeed possible from English into other languages**. Many interpreters of different languages, especially those whose origins are quite different from English, believe that the differences in syntax and lexicon between English and their other language make simultaneous interpretation into the non-English language impossible. The following statistics, again from New Jersey and for the same time period, show that it is indeed possible to perform simultaneous interpretation from English into languages that range from similar to very dissimilar to English, although it is also true that there is some evidence that it may be easier to perform simultaneous interpretation into some languages than others.

**The most obvious implication for candidates is that simultaneous interpretation is indeed possible from English into all other languages for which there are exams. It requires a considerable amount of sophistication in knowledge of the two languages as well as skill in the performance of this mode of interpretation. Knowledge and skill at this level can ordinarily be attained only through extensive training and practice. Do not allow yourself to believe in or be held back by the suspicion or belief that simultaneous interpretation from English into your mother tongue is impossible and the test is therefore unfair and invalid.**

Language	Highest Score Ever Reached on Simultaneous
Arabic, Modern Standard	78
Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian	97
French	91
Haitian Creole	86
Italian	87
Korean	93
Mandarin	89
Polish	96
Portuguese	90
Russian	91
Spanish	96
Turkish	75
Vietnamese	79

Suggestions for preparing for the test are provided at Page 1, “Keys to Success.” Read that page carefully. In addition, study the detailed suggestions in Appendix B.

**7. When will my exam be scheduled?**

There are **three testing periods held per year (April, August and December), with each session being one week in duration**. Once you submit your oral exam application and payment, **you will be notified via e-mail** as to which testing session you have been assigned to. All tests are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Your appointment letter, which includes the date and time of your exam, will also be sent to you via e-mail at least three weeks prior to testing. **Do NOT submit an application unless you are ready! Please be sure and check your e-mail frequently once you have sent us your application and fee. The 2020 and 2021 oral exam testing sessions are as follows:**

<b>2021:</b>	<b>Session Full</b> <b>April 19-23</b>	<b>Session Full</b> <b>August 23-27</b>	<b>December 6-10</b>
<b>2022:</b>	<b>April 18-22</b>	<b>August 22-26</b>	<b>December 12-16</b>

**8. *If I want to take more than one test, how will that work? Do I have to make two trips, one for each separate language?***

When a candidate submits applications for two or more languages, we assume that the average candidate would prefer to make as few trips to the test site as possible. Accordingly, unless a candidate indicates otherwise, the presumptive approach is to schedule both tests on the same date with a short break in between them. For example, if a candidate wishes to take both the French and Spanish exam, that candidate will be scheduled to take one at, say, 9:00 a.m., and the other at 10:30 a.m.

However, if any candidate wishes to take tests for different languages on different dates, all the candidate need do is so notify the LSS. In these instances, please be clear about the sequence in which you wish to be scheduled for tests and how much time you'd prefer to have between tests. **You will be asked your preference via e-mail and scheduled accordingly.**

**9. *Can I take all sections of the test at one time?***

**We do not recommend it for first-time candidates.** The majority of candidates will take the test in two phases: simultaneous first and, if they reach a score of 50% or higher, will be invited back at a later date to take the sight and consecutive sections. Here are the exceptions to this general principle (whatever sections are identified will be taken in one trip, not two):

- A. Candidates taking exams for which there are only sight and simultaneous sections.
- B. Candidates who have been certified by states [i.e., California (if certified prior to 2011), Massachusetts and New York] or other entities (i.e., NAJIT) for which New Jersey does not grant reciprocity.
- C. Candidates who have completed a program of study such as a Certificate in Court Interpretation from Hunter College or NYU, and the M.A. in Spanish Translation from Rutgers University, and who therefore show a significantly higher probability of passing the test on the first attempt.
- D. Candidates who are being retested (i.e., persons retaking whatever sections they need in order to pass or reach a higher level of classification).
- E. Candidates from distant locations, such as states far away from New Jersey or other countries, and for whom special arrangements have been made to complete the court interpreter approval/ registration process in an expedited manner.

**10. *How far in advance will I find out the time and date of my exam?***

The LSS sends out notices of oral exam appointments **via e-mail** as far in advance as possible and guarantees **a minimum advance notice**, upon receipt of the test application and applicable fee, **of two weeks**. When test slots open up unexpectedly due to cancellations, LSS staff will sometimes call or e-mail candidates who are on a waiting list to see if they would like to fill one of those slots. Such slots are offered on a first-come, first-served basis and those candidates are not expected, much less required, to accept a test appointment on such short notice. It's just an effort by the LSS to make efficient use of available test slots and offer an opportunity to be tested on short notice to those candidates who are ready to be tested and have requested to be placed on the wait-list.

**11. *Do I have to take the oral exam when I have received an appointment letter?***

**Yes!** This is a professional exam and applicants are required to take it when they are scheduled. If you do not confirm your test appointment, we will assume you are no longer interested in taking the test and you will be issued a refund (minus the \$25 administrative fee). Furthermore, if you do not confirm your appointment by the deadline indicated in the appointment letter, your slot will be given to someone else and your fee will be refunded (minus the \$25 administrative fee). If you confirm your appointment but are unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, please send an e-mail stating whether you would like to be rescheduled or if you'd like your full fee refunded. **Please note that you can only reschedule once.** After that you will be issued a full refund and you must resend your application and fee. If you do not contact Language Services and are a "no show" for your exam, we will assume you are no longer interested, shred your application, and issue a refund (minus the \$25 administrative fee).

**12. What should I bring to the exam?**

The only thing you must bring is **photo identification**, such as a driver's license or passport, to enter the building. Everything you need (headset/earphones for taking the simultaneous section of the exam, pen/pencil and paper for notetaking, etc.) to take the exam will be supplied. However, be advised that any notes you take during the exam must be left with the test proctor before leaving. A list of prohibited items will be sent with your appointment letter. **NOTHING is allowed to be brought into the testing room.**

**13. What should I do if I am not at my best on the date of the exam?**

Get plenty of rest the night before and come to the test well rested, prepared to do your best. However, **if you are sick or are under some form of intense emotional distress** (i.e., a loved one has just passed away, you are in the midst of a highly-charged divorce, etc.), **it's best to cancel your test appointment.** Once you take the test, the results will be final and you cannot claim after the fact that you were not at your best or ask for another chance to be tested. Simply being nervous or unprepared is not an acceptable excuse for canceling your test appointment.

**14. When do I enter the testing room?**

Please wait patiently at the waiting area designated in your test appointment letter until you are escorted to the testing room. **DO NOT KNOCK ON THE DOOR OR ATTEMPT TO ENTER THE TESTING ROOM UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

Please understand that while every effort is made to follow a day's test schedule closely, sometimes the schedule gets backed up. Please be patient should your test be somewhat later than the scheduled time.

In addition, if you arrive early and the test administrator or proctor is running ahead of schedule, he or she will ask you if you would like to go ahead and take the test a bit ahead of the scheduled time. It is completely your choice whether to accept such an offer. You are under no obligation to take the test ahead of your scheduled time.

**15. What will the testing room look like?**

The exam is given in a small conference room. There will be a pitcher of water, a steno pad to take notes, pencil, pen, a laptop, earphones/headset, laptop, and two digital recorders on a table. The recorders are for recording your exam and will be turned on as you enter the room in order to record the entire test.

You are free to choose to sit or stand while taking the test. The person administering the exam will sit on the opposite side of the table.

**16. Who will be in the testing room?**

Only a proctor or test administrator will be present. From time to time, the LSS has to train new staff on how to proctor exams. In this scenario, the proctor "trainee" is present with the permission of the candidate and always remains anonymous and silent. The proctor "trainee" will always be seated out of the candidate's line of sight, as the goal is to make the trainee as invisible as possible.

**17. What happens if I miss my scheduled test?**

If you confirm your appointment but are unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, please send an e-mail stating whether you wish to reschedule your exam or be sent a full refund. ***Please note that you can only reschedule ONCE; after that a refund will be issued and you must reapply. If you do not contact LSS, we will assume you are no longer interested, shred your application and issue you a refund minus the \$25 administrative fee.***

**18. How are the tests graded?**

All tests are constructed so that they can be graded objectively. This is accomplished by selecting "scoring units" in the text of the test and assessing each examinee's rendering of each scoring unit. Scoring units are particular words and phrases that have been selected by the test developers to measure specific linguistic phenomena.

A description of the types of scoring units that are distributed throughout the test is attached at Appendix C. Anyone who wants further information about how the scoring units work should read "Credentialing Court Interpreters," an essay published in PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND ANNUAL INSTITUTE FOR COURT INTERPRETERS (August 1990).

The examiners determine whether each scoring unit is interpreted correctly or incorrectly, and only these elements of the test are actually graded. When grading exams, the examiners consider correct any rendering that would be acceptable **in any variety of the target language**. For a scoring unit to be counted wrong, each of the examiners must agree that it is wrong. The overall score of each test section is calculated by dividing the total number of scoring units in that test section into the total number of scoring units interpreted correctly.

**19. What are the qualifications of the two raters who grade the exam?**

All persons who grade tests (raters) must satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

- A. Federal certification as a court interpreter;
- B. Ph.D. (or the closest equivalent) in the linguistics of the test's language;
- C. Certification as an interpreter by the United Nations;
- D. Professional interpreter/translator with the highest credentials available for that particular language; and/or
- E. Practicing court interpreters who have scored at the Master level of the AOC's test or the equivalent.

All examiners (also called "raters") are trained and approved by the National Center for State Courts and evaluated carefully to ensure that they follow the established test administration and rating standards. **Each oral exam is rated by TWO expert NCSC raters.**

**20. What is the basic sequence when I take the simultaneous section only?**

The test is highly structured and administered the same way, so far as is humanly possible, to every examinee. The basic structure is as follows:

- A. The proctor will escort you into the testing room after securing all your belongings in the designated locked closet.
- B. You will be asked to sign the NCSC Test Candidate Agreement sent to you with your appointment letter for review.
- C. The proctor will read general test instructions.
- D. The proctor will read instructions for the simultaneous section of the exam. The proctor will instruct you to put on the headphones, show you how to adjust the volume on the speakers and then ask if you have any questions.
- E. The simultaneous portion of the test will then be administered (the recording of the test includes an introduction that is about one minute long and the **test itself, which is about 7 minutes long**).
- F. The proctor will read information about the test grading process and timetable and then escort you from the testing room so you can leave.



**21. What is the basic sequence when I take the balance of the exam?**

Candidates who complete the simultaneous section successfully will be asked to return during the next testing session to take the sight and consecutive sections of the exam. These test sections are also highly structured and administered the same way to every examinee. The basic process you can expect is as follows:

- A. The proctor will escort you into the testing room after securing all your belongings in the designated locked closet.
- B. You will be asked to sign the NCSC Test Candidate Agreement sent to you with your appointment letter for review.
- C. The proctor will read general test instructions and then instructions for the sight section of the exam and ask if you have any questions.
- D. The test's English-to-foreign language portion will be administered following explicit instructions.
- E. After a brief pause, the foreign language-to-English portion of the test will be administered following explicit instructions.
- F. After a brief pause, the proctor will read instructions for the consecutive section and ask if you have any questions.
- G. The consecutive section of the test will be administered using a laptop. The proctor will play an utterance in English, pause the laptop, and the candidate interprets that utterance into the other language. Then the proctor plays a response from a witness or party speaking another language and pauses the laptop for the candidate to interpret the response into English. This is the usual pattern throughout most consecutive exams; but in some cases, there may be two or more back-to-back utterances in English or the other language. **You have approximately 22 minutes to complete this section.**
- H. The proctor will read information about the test grading process and timetable and then escort you from the testing room to a public area so you can leave.

**22. On average, how long am I in the testing room?**

- **Simultaneous only:** The exam itself is about 7 minutes long and the whole process takes less than 20 minutes.
- **Simultaneous plus sight:** Each sight exam takes about 7 minutes and the simultaneous another 7 minutes. The whole process takes no more than 30 minutes.
- **Sight and consecutive:** Each sight will take about 7 minutes and the consecutive approximately 22 minutes. The whole process takes less than 40 minutes.
- **Sight, consecutive and simultaneous:** The whole process takes about 50 minutes.

**23. If I score 50% or higher on the simultaneous, do I have to take the rest of the exam before taking the simultaneous section again?**

**Yes.** The complete test cycle (which includes two phases for most languages: simultaneous, then sight/consecutive) must be finished before it can begin again.

**24. Are there any specific suggestions I should keep in mind when taking the Simultaneous section?**

Audio files have been produced of simulated legal proceedings. The rate of speech is approximately 120 words per minute. That speed is significantly slower than average courtroom speech (which is around 160 words per minute). You will listen to the test via the headset and interpret simultaneously out-loud everything said into the test's language, to the best of your ability.

After a brief introduction by the test proctor, you put on the headset. Before the simultaneous portion begins, you will have the chance to adjust the volume and be sure the headset fits comfortably. At the beginning of the audio recording and before the test itself starts, there is a brief introduction that is about one minute long. The introduction will make it clear that the candidate should begin interpreting after a period of about five seconds of silence. The first several words or sentence of the test material are also provided to the candidate. The test itself runs approximately seven minutes.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** *Once the test portion of the audio file begins, the audio file may not be stopped.* If a candidate insists on stopping the test (sometimes candidates realize they simply cannot do simultaneous interpretation and do not want to continue), that will terminate the test and all scoring units that follow the point at which the test is stopped will be counted as incorrect.

*Suggestions to Remember When Taking the **Simultaneous** Section*

- Keep up with the source material as best you can. Maintain the pace.
- Don't let one word throw you off. If you don't know it or don't know how to interpret it, leave it out and keep going.
- If you get lost or fall behind, take a deep breath and resume interpreting as soon as you can. Missing a few words here and there will not cause you to fail the entire exam.

If notes are useful and appropriate, take notes to help you interpret.

**25. Are there any specific suggestions I should keep in mind when taking the Sight section?**

The proctor will give the candidate a one-page text written in English. The candidate then has a maximum of two minutes to read and study the document before having to start interpreting. Candidates are strongly urged to take advantage of the full two minutes to analyze the document and perhaps even take notes to support the delivery of the translation.

After that review period, the candidate will then have a maximum of four minutes to render a sight interpretation of the entire text. Candidates may begin interpreting at any time, but they must begin once two minutes have passed (the test administrator will tell the candidate when this happens) and must stop four minutes later. The process then is repeated with a document written in the other language.

*Suggestions to Remember When Taking the **Sight** Section*

- Read through each document BEFORE beginning your interpretation.
- Make notes of solutions while reading and refer to them when interpreting.
- Interpret everything you see on the page; do not leave out anything.
- Deliver the interpretation in a smooth, even pace. A choppy delivery is not professional, but a poor delivery plays no role in how the test is scored.
- Do not fill pauses in your interpretation with “um” or “ah”. When you need a moment to think, silence is much more professional.
- Do not speed through your rendition. The time allotted is ample for a competent interpreter. There is no reward for speed. At the same time, avoid long pauses.
- If you need reading glasses, bring them with you to the exam and put them on before you start the sight exam.
- Do not write on or fold the written test document.

**26. Are there any specific suggestions I should keep in mind when taking the Consecutive section?**

This section simulates taking evidence from a witness who speaks the test’s language. This is administered from an audio file. Candidates will interpret the questions from English into the test’s language and the answers from the test’s language to English.

It is in the candidate’s best interest to interpret right after each speaker has finished speaking, as there is a time limit for this portion of the test. Most people finish it in less than 16 minutes.

Once the consecutive portion begins, you may not interrupt the test. You may ask for two utterances to be repeated, but may not ask for clarification of a word or phrase. In the case of a repeat, the entire passage must be repeated and interpreted.

Be aware of the fact that passages in the consecutive portion may be more than one sentence long and vary in length. The maximum length of any passage is 50 words. Many contain two or more sentences. Candidates may not stop the speaker and must wait until the entire passage is finished before beginning to interpret.

*Suggestions to Remember When Taking the **Consecutive** Section*

- **Develop a notetaking system before you take the exam.** Use your system to take notes during the exam to supplement your short-term memory. Notetaking is an essential skill for performing the consecutive mode professionally and competently.
- Use your two repeats; but use them wisely. If you use them early in the exam on short utterances, they won’t be available to you if you struggle with longer utterances.

27. **Are there any other suggestions on what I should do or avoid doing when I take the test?**

Here are some additional tips that will be helpful if you keep them in mind while you are taking the test:

**DO**

- Come dressed the way you would be dressed to work in a real courtroom.
- Perform throughout all sections of the test as though you were interpreting in a courtroom in a real case. The only time you should go out of this role is when you are not actually taking a test section.
- Attempt to interpret any words or phrases that may be unfamiliar to you if you can make an educated guess about their meaning from the context given to you in the passage. If you cannot make an educated guess, say something like this: "The interpreter does not know how to interpret [insert the word or phrase]" and proceed with the rest of your interpretation.
- Use the same person that is employed by a speaker or writer. For example, if the witness were to say in another language the equivalent of "My name is Teresita Salazar," the proper interpretation into English would be, "My name is Teresita Salazar," NOT, "She says her name is Teresita Salazar."
- Conserve the intent, tone, and language level of the source messages you interpret.
- Use appropriate notetaking techniques in each section of the exam.

**DO NOT**

- Let yourself be distracted by anything in the room.
- Let yourself be distracted by sounds coming into the room.
- Guess wildly the meaning of a word or phrase that you don't know.
- Allow yourself to get frustrated when you don't know how to interpret a word or phrase.
- Express frustration in a way that can be seen by the proctor.
- Give a string of synonyms for a given word or several interpretations for a particular phrase. If you do this, the last synonym or phrase you render will be graded and this practice will be counted off on the subjective evaluation of your professionalism.

## ***Court Interpreting Oral Exam Results***

### **1. What are the possible outcomes on the test?**

There are two classification levels for approved interpreters: Master and Journey. There are also two classifications for candidates who fail the exam. First, candidates may fail but reach the conditionally-approved level, which entitles to them to work on a limited basis (see below). The conditionally-approved level is considered to be the level of a trainee and includes everyone who reached certain scoring criteria and show promise of ultimately being able to pass the test. All other candidates have also failed, but are not allowed to work as court interpreters. All candidates wishing to retest must wait one year before doing so.

#### **Pass: Master**

To be classified at the Master level, a person must score as follows on the court interpreting oral exam and, if applicable, the written test:

- A. 80% or higher in each of the three sections of the interpreting test;
- B. 80% or higher in each section of the sight section of the interpreting test; and
- C. 85% or higher on the written exam (applies to candidates who entered the court interpreter approval/registration process via the mandatory one-day seminar between January 1, 2005 and January 1, 2008, or via the written test on or after January 1, 2008, and anycandidate seeking a higher classification level).

#### **Pass: Journey**

To be classified at the Journey level, a person must have scored as follows on the court interpreting oral exam and, if applicable, the written test:

- A. 70% or higher in each of the three sections of the interpreting test;
- B. 65% or higher in each part of the sight section of the interpreting test; with an average of 70% or higher on both sections combined, and
- C. 80% or higher on the written exam (applies to candidates who entered the court interpreter approval/registration process via the mandatory one-day seminar between January 1, 2005 and January 1, 2008, or via the written test on or after January 1, 2008, and anycandidate seeking a higher classification level).

#### **Fail: Conditionally Approved**

To be classified at the conditionally-approved level, a person must have scored as follows on the court interpreting oral exam and, if applicable, the written test:

- A. 50% or higher in each of the three sections of the interpreting test;
- B. 50% or higher in each section of the sight part of the exam;
- C. **An average of 55% or higher across all sections of the exam.** (Persons testing in a language for which there is only a simultaneous exam available **must score 55% or higher** on the simultaneous exam.); and
- D. 70% or higher on the written test (applies to candidates who entered the court interpreter approval/registration process via the mandatory one-day seminar between January 1, 2005 and January 1, 2008, or via the written test on or after January 1, 2008, and anycandidate seeking a higher classification level).

Persons who score at the conditionally-approved level will be invited to register and may work initially in both Municipal Courts and State Courts (Superior and Tax Court). However, with respect to working in state-level courts, conditionally-approved interpreters are called for work "only when there are no approved interpreters for the particular language or when substantial effort has failed to locate an approved interpreter." See [Directive #1-17, Language Access Plan](#), Standard 1.3.

**NOTE:** Typically, for purposes of working in any state-level court, persons who score at the conditionally-approved level may remain in that status no longer than two years from the date the candidate completes the interpreting examination. If the candidate does not attempt to successfully reach a passing level during that two-year time period:

- A. The interpreter may continue to provide interpreting services in Municipal Courts, but will no longer be eligible to be listed in the *Registry of On-Site Interpreting Resources* or deliver interpreting services in Superior or Tax Court (exceptions may be allowed upon clear demonstration of significant progress); and
- B. Should the interpreter ever wish to enter the testing program again, any portion of the interpreting test he or she may have previously passed will have to be taken again. In other words, for persons at the trainee level, passing a portion of the interpreting test is valid for only two years. Additionally, if the interpreter has NOT taken the written exam, he or she MUST take the written exam first in order to retake the oral exams.

### **Fail: Everyone Who Did Not Pass or Who Reached the Conditionally-Approved Level**

Anyone who scored below 50% in any or all three sections of the exam has **failed** the exam. Anyone who scored BELOW the conditionally-approved level has failed and is not eligible to interpret in ANY court. These persons are not eligible to work in any court or arm of the court under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Supreme Court and must wait one year before retesting.

## **2. How much time passes before I receive my results and what information will I receive regarding my test?**

Ordinarily it takes **8 to 12 weeks** to complete the rating process and, once the scores have been received from the rater(s), to process and e-mail all result letters. We will send, via e-mail, each candidate a cover letter and Assessment Sheet summarizing their exam results.

The Assessment Sheet and the actual numerical scores are not public record. This document and its scores are made available only to judges, authorized court administrators, etc., who have a legitimate need to know a candidate's scores. However, the overall results of the test are a matter of public record for all persons who pass or score at the conditionally-approved level and, accordingly, are available to anyone upon request.

## **3. Who will be able to see my results? Are my results made public?**

The test results are not a matter of public record for persons who fail at a level below conditionally approved. The only groups to whom information regarding examinees who fail at that level will be provided are:

- a) authorized court employees;
- b) anyone to whom the examinee requests the LSS to give the results (and the examinee must make a written request for this service);
- c) staff to the National Center of State Courts (as they manage a centralized database for all examinees of member jurisdictions); and
- d) court interpreter certification program managers in other jurisdictions.

Anyone else who contacts the LSS to find out if a certain individual has taken the test will be told "Yes" only for those persons who have passed it or scored at the level of conditionally approved. If the examinee has otherwise failed, the answer will be something like this: "We have no record that anyone by that name has reached a qualifying level."

**4. If I think I did better than my score indicates, can I appeal the results?**

There is no mechanism or right to appeal test scores, except when there is clearly something that interfered with the fairness of how the test was administered in a specific situation that was outside the candidate's control. With that one exception, all test results are final as reported to the candidate. Keep in mind that all tests whose scores are close to a threshold are **automatically** re-graded. So in a way, some tests have an automatic appeal built into the grading process.

**5. If I pass some but not all sections of the test, do I have to take the ones I passed again to reach a higher classification?**

Except for conditionally-approved interpreters who have not retested within the two-year timeframe (see Note #2 above in the Fail: Conditionally Approved subsection of #1 above for details), once a candidate has passed a section of a test at the Master level, that candidate does not have to take that section again. For example, if a candidate scores at the Master level on the sight section, but below the Master level on the consecutive and simultaneous sections and wishes to be retested in the hopes of reaching the Master level, that person will have to retake only the consecutive and simultaneous sections.

***Retesting from the Conditionally-Approved Level  
in the Hopes of Reaching a Higher Level***

Typically, anyone who scores at the conditionally-approved level will be required to retake those sections of the exam that were not passed within two years of completing the testing process. Conditionally-approved interpreters should see the Resources for Professional Development document posted on our website for ideas on improving knowledge, skills, and abilities. Additionally, you may e-mail LSS at [LangSvc mailbox@njcourts.gov](mailto:LangSvc mailbox@njcourts.gov) and request a list of on-line course suggestions. These candidates are eligible to retest after a year has passed since their last testing date and must submit a new application to LSS when eligible and ready to retest.

Conditionally-approved interpreters who do not test up to a Journey or Master level within two years may lose their eligibility to be listed in the *Registry* and to work in Superior Court. However, they may provide service in the Municipal Courts. Additionally, those interpreters who have NOT taken the written exam must do so before retaking the oral exams.

***Test results from other jurisdictions, including states that are members of the National Center for State Courts, will not be accepted for those who started the testing process in New Jersey.*** Once a person has started the testing process in New Jersey, that person must complete it in New Jersey. The only exception is if a candidate becomes certified by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts (AOUSC), which will be accepted.

***Retesting from the Journey Level in the  
Hopes of Reaching the Master Level***

After qualifying as a Journey interpreter, many interpreters will want to enhance their professional status by reaching the Master level. Journey interpreters are eligible to take the oral exam again after having been working in the Journey status for one year and after one year has passed since their last testing date. In addition, if they attended the introductory one-day seminar after January 1, 2005 or if they are seeking an upgrade in classification, they also have to reach a score of 85% on the written exam.

***Anyone who has scored at the Journey level and wishes to test up to the Master level must also be retested by the LSS after one year has passed since their last testing date. Test results from other jurisdictions, including members of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), will not be valid for this purpose. The only exception to this rule is that candidates who are certified by the AOUSC will be deemed to have reached the Master level.***

Any section(s) of the test in which a person tested at 80% or higher is not required to be retested. However, sections of the exam may be retested at the request of the candidate and if approved by the LSS. The test may be retaken no more frequently than one time per year. *Anyone who does not pass the test at the Master level when trying to reach the Master level should see the Resources for Professional Development document posted on our website for ideas on improving knowledge, skills, and abilities.*

***WARNING: Anyone who is retesting to reach the Master level and whose score winds up below the Journey level on the retest will not have their Journey status affected the first time. However, anyone who tests below the Journey level two consecutive times will presumptively have his or her classification downgraded to the level demonstrated in the retest results.***

## **Candidates Sent by Municipal Courts**

Most of the testing procedures described above apply to candidates who are sent by Municipal Courts to be tested. However, sometimes exceptions are made from time to time to meet the special needs of Municipal Courts. Most importantly, tests for such employees are given a high priority by the LSS. **Please note that all first-time Judiciary employees will be tested in the bifurcated manner**, which means they will take the simultaneous section of the exam first and, if they score at the conditionally-approved level or higher, will then be scheduled for the sight and consecutive sections during our next oral exam session.

All test results are confidential and will be given only to authorized persons (i.e., the Presiding Judge, Court Administrator or Court Director) at the Municipal Court.

The most significant differences are that (1) the standard for qualifying to work in a Municipal Court is scoring at the conditionally-approved level and (2) test results are sent directly to the Court Director or Administrator of the Municipal Court that requested a certain candidate be tested, who in turn provides the candidate with the results.

## **Candidates Who Are Superior Court Staff Interpreters**

Most of the testing procedures described above apply to candidates who are staff court interpreters in the Superior Court. Most importantly, tests for such employees are given a high priority by the LSS and are scheduled more easily since they are a top priority.

The only significant difference is that test results are sent directly to the Vicinage Coordinator of Interpreting Services to whom the staff court interpreter reports, if applicable, or to the Operations Manager for that vicinage. That individual is asked to give a copy of the test results to the employee who took the test. All test results are confidential and may be given to authorized persons (i.e., the Assignment Judge, Trial Court Administrator, and other key managers) only.

## **Special Features of Certain Tests**

There are special features that prospective examinees may want to be aware of for some of the tests. Those special features are listed below by language.

### **Arabic**

A special document for Arabic candidates has been developed and is posted on our website. Go to the "Becoming a NJ Court Interpreter in a Spoken Language" page and click on any of the Arabic listings there. Look for the document entitled "[Becoming an Arabic Court Interpreter](#)."

### **Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian**

This exam is abbreviated and consists only of English-to-foreign language simultaneous, as well as a Spoken English Test. The results on this exam are considered provisional until such time as the sight and consecutive sections are added. If these sections are added in the near future, incumbents will be given a fair amount of time within which to prepare and take these additional sections.

### **Cantonese**

Since there are two forms of writing Cantonese, the sight document written in Cantonese will be available in each form. At the beginning of the sight portion of the test, the test administrator will give the examinee the option of using either the traditional or the simplified form.

In all sections of the test when interpreting out of English, the examinee must interpret into Cantonese. Anything interpreted into Cantonese, or any other variety of Chinese, will not be accepted.

### **Mandarin**

As with Cantonese/Yue (see above), the test administrator will give the examinee the option of using either the traditional or the simplified form. In all sections of the test when interpreting out of English, the examinee must interpret into Mandarin. Other varieties of Chinese will not be accepted.



### **Portuguese**

The sections of the test that are in Portuguese are designed to be comprehensible to speakers of all standard varieties of Portuguese. When interpreting from English into Portuguese, the examinee may use any standard variety of Portuguese, regardless of country of origin.

### **Spanish**

The sections of the test that are in Spanish are designed to be comprehensible to speakers of all standard varieties of Spanish. When interpreting from English into Spanish, the examinee may use any standard variety of Spanish, regardless of country of origin.

### **Turkish**

This exam is abbreviated and consists only of English-to-foreign language simultaneous, as well as a Spoken English Test. The results on this exam are considered provisional until such time as the sight and consecutive sections are added. If these sections are added in the near future, incumbents will be given a fair amount of time within which to prepare and take these additional sections.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Knowledge, Skills And Abilities for the Profession of Court Interpretation**

#### **What knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are needed to become a court interpreter?**

A helpful way to consider the KSAs of court interpreters is the comprehensive itemization issued in 2007 by a research report commissioned by the Judicial Council of California.<sup>3</sup> The KSAs they determined to be “essential for the performance of court interpretation” appear below.<sup>4</sup> Again, please ask yourself two questions about **each** KSA: (1) Do I currently have this KSA? (2) If not, what am I willing and able to do to obtain each of these KSAs?

#### **Linguistic Skills**

- Native-like proficiency in all working languages;
- Ability to think and react communicatively in all working languages;
- Knowledge and use of a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, subject-specific terminology, and slang; and
- Knowledge and use of cultural nuances, regional variations, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms in all working languages.

#### **Speaking Skills**

- Ability to speak with proper pronunciation, diction, and intonation in all working languages;
- Ability to speak with a neutralized accent in all working languages; and
- Ability to project and/or speak softly.

#### **Listening Comprehension Skills**

- Ability to listen to and comprehend different rates of speech in all working languages;
- Ability to listen to and comprehend various regional accents and/or dialect differences in all working languages; and
- Ability to ignore auditory distractions and focus on source speaker.

#### **Reading Comprehension Skills**

- Ability to read and comprehend overall meaning and specific details of written text in all working languages.
- Ability to read and recognize various written contexts, including formal and informal text, subject-specific vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and colloquialisms; and
- Ability to read quickly and with little preparation.

#### **Interpreting Skills**

- Ability to concentrate and focus;
- Ability to process linguistic information quickly;
- Ability to make quick linguistic decisions regarding word choice or terminology selection;
- Ability to apply short-term memory skills in retaining small units of information;
- Ability to think analytically;
- Ability to utilize predictive thinking skills to anticipate incoming messages;
- Ability to convey meaning;
- Ability to provide transference from one language to another;
- Ability to preserve accuracy;
- Ability to select appropriate equivalents for vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to accommodate for lack of equivalents in vocabulary or phrases;
- Ability to conserve intent, tone, style, and utterances of all messages;
- Ability to reflect register; and
- Ability to self-monitor and self-correct.

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<sup>3</sup> *Study of California’s Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing*, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

### **Behavioral Skills**

- Ability to practice and follow ethical standards;
- Ability to conduct business in a professional manner;
- Knowledge and awareness of cultural aspects that affect language;
- Ability to work in various settings, situations, or conditions;
- Ability to project self-confidence and self-awareness when interpreting; and
- Knowledge and continued learning of social, technological, and legal changes that affect language.

In his comments on that report to the Judicial Council of California, Robert Joe Lee<sup>5</sup> identified several additional KSAs that you should also consider as vital to the day-to-day work of an Arabic court interpreter:

- Ability to exercise situational control appropriately (e.g., knowing how to handle impediments to performing court interpreting duties and having the fortitude to do so);
- Ability to switch back and forth among the various modes of interpretation appropriately;
- Ability to use notetaking techniques effectively to supplement short-term memory;
- Ability to work effectively and productively on a team of interpreters (teams of two or more interpreters are important if not essential in proceedings that last two hours or longer);
- Ability to prepare for assignments, including knowing when and how to request appropriate information;
- Ability to use equipment appropriately, especially simultaneous and telephone interpreting devices; and
- Ability to use professional judgment flowing from professional codes of conduct and conform one's practice to the interpreter's role and functions.

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<sup>5</sup> "Comments on the Study of California's Court Interpreter Certification and Registration Testing," December 14, 2007.

## **Appendix B: Specific Suggestions for Developing Court Interpreting Skills**

*Most of the information in this section is from "The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Manual" prepared for the Administrative Office of the United States Courts by the University of Arizona Federal Court Interpreter Certification Project. Additional suggestions can be found in FUNDAMENTALS OF COURT INTERPRETATION: THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE by Roseann Dueñas González, Victoria Vásquez, and Holly Mikkelson. It is available from Carolina Academic Press, 700 Kent Street, Durham, NC 27701; 919-489-7486; FAX 919-493-5668.*

The following are suggestions that may improve candidates' skills and strengthen their interpreting performance:

### **1. Listening and Concentration Skills**

Since effective court interpreting requires accuracy and speed, it is essential to enhance one's listening and concentration capabilities.

**Listening:** Practice your ability to listen through earphones and other mechanical devices and to render the meaning of the communication rather than the separate words.

**Concentration:** Learn to concentrate on what is being communicated by the person for whom you are interpreting. Only concentrate on the actual communication without being distracted by external factors such as physical appearance, gestures, etc.

### **2. Notetaking Skills**

For many interpreters, notetaking is extremely helpful, especially when interpreting in the consecutive mode. If you find that you benefit from notetaking, develop an efficient notetaking system in order to remember relevant names, dates, places, and figures. It is often essential to develop this skill under the direction of an experienced interpreter or teacher.

Notes may be recorded in the form of simple outlines, charts, diagrams, or graphs. Listing information in the form of a diagram may be helpful while interpreting at a trial during which a particular scenario is repeatedly mentioned.

An effective notetaking system also allows you to concentrate on ideas and concepts. It is important to adopt a strategy or strategies that work best for you. Remember that you must also improve your memory and concentration skills in order to reproduce information in the appropriate order during the interpretation process.

### **3. Memory Building Skills**

The following memory building exercises may be helpful:

#### **Exercise A**

Have someone tape record some fact filled newspaper or journal articles. Then listen to the passage, stopping the recording after every sentence. Take down in note form any difficult information in the sentence, such as dates, names, time, places, reference numbers, and quantities. Then repeat the statement in the same language. Monitor your progress by recording your rendition on paper or on another tape recorder and then compare it to the original. Proceed with this type of exercise until you have finished with the article. Increase the difficulty by doing two sentences and then three sentences at a time to build your memory ability.

#### **Exercise B**

Repeat the process in the previous paragraph. However, do not repeat into the source language. This time interpret the statements into the target language using notetaking as a memory stimulus.

You may vary exercises A and B by omitting the notetaking requirement.

The following recall exercise may help increase memory power:

- A. Have someone tape record passages of varied length and topics, in English and Spanish.
- B. Listen to the entire passage. Then turn off the tape recorder and say out loud the entire passage. Tape record your response and compare it to the original.
- C. Vary this exercise by taking notes.

#### 4. **Analytical Skills**

Interpretation relies on how well the interpreter understands a message. Understanding a message requires intellectual listening, that is, listening for ideas. An interpreter must listen to a message and simultaneously classify the information in the message into a hierarchy. An interpreter makes instantaneous decisions about which ideas are central and which are supporting or minor. The following is an exercise that may help build this skill:

- A. Have someone record several passages of approximately 150 words, some in Spanish and others in English. Choose texts representing a variety of areas. Then listen to each passage without taking notes. Turn off the recorder. Write down the main idea of the passage. Continue this procedure with all the passages. Then listen to each passage again, confirming the main idea you had recorded earlier.
- B. Listen to the passage again. Turn off the recorder. Note additional specific information to support the main idea you had originally taken down.
- C. Continue procedure b, taking notes and adding to the information until you have written a complete summary for each passage.

You may do memory building and analytical skills exercises with another person or a group of people in order to receive immediate and constant feedback. In fact, all of the exercises mentioned in this section would be more beneficial with some supervision.

#### 5. **Specific Suggestions for the Different Interpreting Modes**

##### **Sight Interpretation**

Take any written material (e.g., newspaper/magazine articles, letters, books) and, speaking into a tape recorder, perform sight interpretations. Evaluate your rendition against the source material. Practice on a variety of types of subjects and vary the types of materials you work with.

##### **Consecutive Interpretation**

1. Follow the steps outlined in 1 and 2 of the Simultaneous Interpretation section below.
2. Attend court proceedings in which a witness is testifying. Practice silently the question and answer format that constitutes most consecutive interpretation tasks in courts. Ask for information about the date and time of proceedings that require an interpreter.

### **Simultaneous Interpretation**

1. Attend municipal, state, and federal court proceedings and simultaneously render them to yourself silently. Try to attend as many different kinds of proceedings as possible.
2. Before you come to take the test, practice your ability to listen through earphones and talk or interpret at the same time as you listen.
3. Use television and radio broadcasts as interpreting materials.
4. Shadowing is a basic exercise that may be helpful to strengthen simultaneous techniques. This exercise accustoms the interpreter to perform two tasks simultaneously.
  - A. Have someone record varied paragraph length passages, some in Spanish and others in English, into a tape recorder.
  - B. Listen to the passage. Then play it again and repeat everything you hear in the same language, staying as close to the speaker as possible.
  - C. Listen to the passage again, repeating it in the source language. While you are focusing on this activity, write numbers 1100 at the same time.
  - D. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write numbers 1001 backwards.
  - E. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write 1100 by 5's.
  - F. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write 1100 by 3's.
  - G. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write out a poem you know from memory.
  - H. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write anything committed to memory such as the Pledge of Allegiance or the Preamble to the Constitution.
  - I. Repeat the exercise and simultaneously write out the names and addresses of relatives and friends.
5. Paraphrasing is an exercise that may be helpful to improve simultaneous interpretation as well as general memory, vocabulary, concentration, and analytical skills. This exercise simulates simultaneous interpretation, yet it does not deal with the complication of the target language. It isolates the simultaneous technique. (Note: Paraphrasing as an exercise must be distinguished from paraphrasing as a form. Paraphrasing into the target language is not appropriate for court interpretation.)
  - A. Listen to the passage you have already recorded for memory and shadowing exercises.
  - B. As you listen, simultaneously restate the message you are hearing in other words in the source language.

## **Appendix C: Types and Distributions of Scoring Units**

### **1. GRAMMAR AND USAGE (25%)**

- A. Grammar/Verbs (15%)  
Features of grammar, especially verbs, that may not be handled appropriately by the unsophisticated user of the two languages.
- B. Language Interference (10%)  
Terms or phrases that are likely to invite misinterpretation due to interference by one language on the other, e.g., false cognates, awkward phrasing; terms or phrases susceptible to literal renditions resulting in loss of precise meaning.

### **2. GENERAL LEXICAL RANGE (40%)**

- C. General Vocabulary (20%)  
Any general lexical item or set of items not easily classified elsewhere among the scoring units.
- D. Legal Terms & Phrases (15%)  
Any legal word or phrase of a legal or technical nature, or which is not common in everyday speech but is commonly used in legal settings.
- E. Idioms/Sayings (5%)  
"Idioms" are sets of words whose meaning as a whole is different from the meaning of the individual words.<sup>6</sup>  
"Sayings" includes famous sayings from literature, history, etc.

### **3. CONSERVATION OF MORE TECHNICAL FORMS (35%)**

- F. Register (5%)  
Words and phrases of unquestionably high or low register that can be preserved in the target language, but might be lowered or raised (e.g., curses, profanity, taboo words).
- G. Numbers/Names (7%)  
Any number (e.g., street address, weight of person or object, measurements such as distance) or name (e.g., person, court, street, town).
- H. Markers/Intensifiers/Emphases/Precision (10%)  
Any word or phrase giving emphasis or precision to a description (e.g., adverbs, adjectives) or statement (e.g., can be grammatical in form).
- I. Embeddings/Positions (9%)  
Words and phrases likely to be omitted due to position (e.g., at the beginning or in the middle of a long sentence; the second in a string of adjectives or adverbs) or function (e.g., tag questions).
- J. Slang/Colloquialisms (4%)  
Words/phrases that seem to be slang or colloquial language.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Here are two technical definitions of "idiom": "Sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit." David Crystal, *A DICTIONARY OF LINGUISTICS AND PHONETICS*, 2nd Ed. 152 (1985). "Fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be inferred by knowing the meanings of the individual words." Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman, *AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE*, Third Ed. 181 (1983).

<sup>7</sup> "Slang" is difficult to define. For reasons why and examples, see Fromkin and Rodman, *id.*, at 264-265.



## New Jersey Judiciary

# Application to Take the New Jersey Court Interpreter Oral Examination

**Note:** This application is for an examination in **ONE language only**. To apply for examinations in multiple languages, you must complete a separate application for each language.

Your **Full** Legal Name

<input type="checkbox"/> Mr.	First Name	Middle Name	Last Name
<input type="checkbox"/> Ms.			
<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs.			

Mailing Address

Street	Apt. No	City	State	Zip code + 4
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County	Daytime Phone	Cell Phone	E-mail Address
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**Check only one box** for the language of the exam you wish to take: \* Abbreviated Exam

<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic: Modern Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> Hmong	<input type="checkbox"/> Portuguese
<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic: Egyptian Colloquial	<input type="checkbox"/> Ilocano	<input type="checkbox"/> Russian
<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic: Levantine Colloquial	<input type="checkbox"/> Korean	<input type="checkbox"/> Somali
<input type="checkbox"/> Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian*	<input type="checkbox"/> Laotian	<input type="checkbox"/> Spanish
<input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin	<input type="checkbox"/> Tagalog (Filipino)
<input type="checkbox"/> French	<input type="checkbox"/> Marshallese*	<input type="checkbox"/> Turkish*
<input type="checkbox"/> Haitian Creole	<input type="checkbox"/> Polish	<input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese

**In what capacity are you taking the oral exam? (Check only one)**

- Employee of the Superior Court
- Employee of a Municipal Court
- Existing or prospective freelance interpreter

**Check all that apply**

- I have read the [Overview for Examinees Taking a Court Interpreter Oral Exam in New Jersey](#).
- I am a first-time candidate. I **have never** taken an oral exam in this language in NJ or any other member state that offers the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) exam.
- I am a repeat candidate. I **have** taken an oral exam in this language either in NJ, or any other member state that offers the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) exam.
- Payment enclosed.

**Affidavit:** I hereby affirm that I will not copy, record, discuss, or in any way divulge any of the words or phrases of the test to anyone during the testing period or at any time thereafter and that I intend to work as a court interpreter in New Jersey.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**ADA Accommodations:** If you will require an accommodation when taking the test, please indicate your accommodation request here:

**Important Note: Applications submitted without accompanying fee will be returned.**

**Mail completed application with accompanying fee** made payable to **“Treasurer, State of New Jersey.”** The fee is payable by check, certified check or money order only. Checks will be deposited upon receipt. **Absolutely NO CASH will be accepted.**

**Regular Mail (US Postal Service)**  
 Language Services  
 Administrative Office of the Courts  
 PO Box 988  
 Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

**Overnight/Express Mail**  
 Language Services  
 Administrative Office of the Courts  
 Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex  
 25 Market Street  
 Trenton, NJ 08625-0988