



OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

Office of the State Court Administrator

DATE
(SENT BY EMAIL)

TO: Oregon Court Interpreters

FROM: Court Language Access Services
Kelly Mills, Program Manager

RE: **Interpreting Concerns When the Court Interpreter Is Asked to Interpret on Standby**

The *Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Oregon Courts* requires that the court interpreter render “a complete and accurate interpretation or sight translation, without altering, omitting anything from, or adding anything to what is stated or written, and without explanation.” A typical standby scenario involves an individual who is relatively comfortable with English but expresses a preference to have an interpreter “on standby” in order to clarify or explain something which he or she may not have understood. Often the individual waits for a break or until the hearing is over and then expects the interpreter to summarize and clarify. Such summarization and clarification, tantamount to explanation, is outside of a court interpreter’s scope of practice.

Only the Court may allow an exception to compliance with the Code. When asked to be on “stand by,” CLAS recommends that the interpreter inform the Court and the parties of the *Code* and the practical difficulties so that the Court may make an informed decision in answer to a standby interpreting request. CLAS recognizes that the court has many factors to keep in mind when making procedural decisions. Unless specifically instructed by the Court, court interpreters should not interpret on standby.