



OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT  
Court Language Access Services

**Prospective Certified Court Interpreter Information**

Thank you for your interest in the Oregon Certified Court Interpreter Program. Court interpreters are a vital part of the administration of justice. Certified court interpreters are highly skilled professionals who are able to perform well in the three modes of interpretation: simultaneous, consecutive and sight.

Court interpreters must be educated speakers of English and another language, and have the ability to interpret all levels of discourse in court proceedings. A court interpreter must have knowledge of court procedures, protocols and maintain high ethical standards required by the "Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Oregon Courts." Court interpreters must commit to the process of life-long learning as set forth in the continuing education requirements outlined in the State Court Administrator's Policies for the Oregon Judicial Department's Oregon Certified Court Interpreter Program.

Requirements for certification include:

- Pass a criminal history check.
- Achieve a passing score on the Written Examination.
- Achieve a passing score on the Court Interpreting Oral Examination.
- Achieve a passing score on the Ethics Examination.
- Complete and submit documentation of 20 hours of court interpreting services of court observation during the 12 months prior to application in courts of record in Oregon or Consortium member states, federal courts of record, or where the interpreter is sworn in and the record can be presented into evidence.
- Complete the application process.
- Take the Interpreter's Oath administered by an Oregon State judge.

It is not unusual for an interpreter to take the oral exam more than once before passing all three parts. In Oregon, the overall pass rate has been about 18 percent over a 15 year period. People may fail the exam the first time and wish to repeat and they can: a prospective interpreter is eligible to take the oral exam up to three times over a three year period (beginning the year in which the written exam is passed).

Program fees and requirements may change from year to year, but details are provided at the beginning of each test cycle. If you feel that you would be able to meet the high standards required of certified court interpreters, please e-mail your contact information, (name, language(s), address, phone number, and e-mail address) to:  
[Court.Interpreter.Program@oid.state.or.us](mailto:Court.Interpreter.Program@oid.state.or.us)



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## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Interpreter Certification Program in Oregon

### **Is being bilingual sufficient to meet the standard to interpret court proceedings?**

No. Certified court interpreters are highly skilled professionals who are able to perform well in the three modes of interpretation: simultaneous, consecutive, and sight. A court interpreter must have knowledge of court procedures, protocols and apply ethical standards required by the "Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Oregon Courts."

### **What languages do you certify?**

We provide certification exams for Arabic, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish and Vietnamese.

### **What if I speak another language?**

If you are interested in becoming an interpreter of a non-OJD certified language, please e-mail [Court.Interpreter.Program@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:Court.Interpreter.Program@ojd.state.or.us) providing your name, language(s), address, phone numbers and e-mail address.

### **How do I become a certified court interpreter in Oregon?**

Requirements for certification include:

- Pass a criminal history check.
- Achieve a passing score on the Written Examination.
- Achieve a passing score on the Court Interpreting Oral Examination.
- Achieve a passing score on the Ethics Examination.
- Complete and submit documentation of 20 hours of court interpreting services of court observation during the 12 months prior to application in courts of record in Oregon or Consortium member states, federal courts of record, or where the interpreter is sworn in and the record can be presented into evidence.
- Complete the application process.
- Take the Interpreter's Oath administered by an Oregon State judge.

### **How do I begin the certification process?**

Please contact our office by e-mail ([Court.Interpreter.Program@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:Court.Interpreter.Program@ojd.state.or.us)) to be added to our mailing database. Provide your name, address, e-mail address, phone number(s) and language(s). You will be notified periodically of scheduled certification activities and professional development opportunities.



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### **How much does it cost to become certified?**

The fees are posted on our website. As of July 1, 2009 the fees established for Oregon residents are: \$65 for the Written Examination, \$100 for the Orientation to Interpreting in the Oregon Courts, \$325 for the Court Interpreting Oral Examination, and \$100 for the Ethics Orientation and Ethics Exam. For non-residents the fees are \$195 for the Written Examination \$150 for the Orientation to Interpreting in the Oregon Courts, \$750 for the Court Interpreting Oral Examination and \$150 for the Ethics Exam and Ethics Orientation.

Fees are assessed each time an individual registers for an exam. For example, if you do not pass the written exam and choose to attempt it again the following year the registration fee will be assessed both years.

### **Can anyone begin testing at any time?**

No. Testing is conducted in a streamlined cycle. Once the testing cycle has started, prospective interpreters must wait until the following cycle to begin the certification process.

### **What does the written examination include?**

The written examination is a multiple-choice examination designed by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts to measure general knowledge of the areas of court interpreting: English language, court related terms and usage, and ethics and professional conduct.

### **What does the ethics exam include?**

The ethics exam consists of 60 multiple choice ethics and professional conduct questions in English. The ethics exam must be passed with a score of 70 percent.

### **After passing the written exam, attending the orientation, and passing the ethics exam, how long am I eligible to take the oral exam?**

A prospective interpreter is eligible to take the oral exam up to three times over a three year period (beginning the year in which the written exam is passed). If a prospective interpreter fails the oral exam three times, the candidate must restart the certification process after the three year period has ended, starting again with the Written Examination.

### **What does the Court Interpreting Oral Examination Include?**

The Court Interpreting Oral Examination is an oral examination designed by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts to measure the interpreting skills in the sight, consecutive, and simultaneous modes of interpretation.

### **How long does the oral examination take?**

It takes about two hours for the exam. If a prospective interpreter arrives late for the exam, s/he may lose the opportunity to test that year and forfeit the exam fee.



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#### **What if I pass part of the oral examination and fail another part?**

In order to obtain the certification credential, you must pass all three parts of the examination (sight, consecutive and simultaneous interpretation) in one exam sitting in Oregon and achieve a minimum passing score of 70% in each portion of the exam.

#### **Who designs the tests?**

The tests are designed through the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts in collaboration with the Consortium Technical Committee, linguists, and highly qualified federal or state court certified interpreters.

#### **I am sure I'll pass the exams. May I call myself "certified" in the meantime, while I'm waiting to test?**

State law (ORS 45.292) prohibits anyone from using the title or designation of "certified" if the person is not certified by the Office of the State Court Administrator, the U.S. District Courts or another state court system using a test equivalent to the test used by the Oregon Certified Court Interpreter Program.

#### **If I pass the oral exam, am I then considered "certified?"**

No. The certification process includes completing an application, documenting 20 hours of court observation, and taking the Interpreter's Oath.

#### **May I interpret without the certification?**

State law requires that an Oregon Certified Court Interpreter must be called to interpret first. If no certified interpreter is available, the court may use a non-certified interpreter who presents qualifications that are acceptable to the court (ORS 45.288).

#### **What do certified interpreters earn?**

Most work for interpreters is freelance work. The Office of the State Court Administrator pays freelance Oregon Certified Court Interpreters \$44.50 per hour. All freelance interpreters are called on an "as needed" basis, and there is no guarantee how much in-court work an interpreter will receive.

#### **What can I do now to prepare for certification?**

Preparation suggestions include:

- use your "target language" (the language in which you would take the oral exam) as often as possible
- read as much as possible in the "target language"
- expand your English vocabulary by familiarizing yourself with legal terminology
- court observation
- active memory exercises
- purchase and use educational resources (Consortium for Language Access in the Courts Practice Examination Kit; ACEBO materials)



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**I am a certified court interpreter in another state; can I apply for reciprocity with the Oregon Judicial Department?**

Oregon allows examination reciprocity for interpreters who have taken examinations in some other Consortium member states or who have taken the Federal Court Interpreting Examination. Oregon also allows examination reciprocity for RID ASL interpreters holding the Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) who are not Oregon residents. Examination reciprocity is the first step leading towards certification reciprocity and is met by interpreters who have achieved an appropriate score on the:

- Federal Court Interpreting Examination (FCICE) or,
  - Court Interpreting Oral Examination or,
  - RID Specialist Certificate: Legal Examination
- and meet the following requirements:

- All segments of the examination must be passed in one sitting,
- The examination must be administered and rated in accordance with Oregon requirements,
- The minimum scores on each section must meet Oregon requirements, and
- The candidate must not have tested in another state for certification during the previous 12 months

**What steps are involved in applying for reciprocity if I am eligible to apply?** Each candidate who has met the requirements for examination reciprocity above must also meet the following requirements:

- Submit verification that the interpreter remains in good standing in the Consortium state, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, or with the RID.
- Pass a criminal history check.
- Attend an Ethics Orientation conducted by CLAS.
- Achieve a passing score on the Ethics Examination.
- Complete and submit documentation of at least 150 hours of court interpreting services during the 12 months prior to application in courts of record in Oregon or Consortium member states, federal courts of record, or where the interpreter is sworn in and the record can be presented into evidence.
- Complete the application process.
- Take the Interpreter's Oath administered by an Oregon State Court Judge.

Please contact us at [court.interpreter.program@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:court.interpreter.program@ojd.state.or.us) if you are interested in pursuing the Oregon Certified Court Interpreter Credential via Reciprocity