

# How do I become a Judiciary Interpreter

- ◇ Judiciary interpreters are required to work with equal fluency from English into a foreign language and from a foreign language into English.
- ◇ They must be familiar with every stage of criminal and civil procedure in the state and federal systems of justice in the United States and their corresponding terminology in English.
- ◇ They need to know the equivalent legal processes in the country or countries where their foreign language is spoken and the equivalent terminology for the legal procedures, laws, crimes, as well as all related systems, such as prisons, immigration, family relations, child custody, and so forth.
- ◇ Judiciary interpreters must abide by a very strict Code of Ethics that requires the highest level of competency, impartiality, confidentiality and continuous learning to stay abreast of social and technological developments that impact language usage and the delivery of their services.



If you are already an experienced, practicing interpreter working in a different field, it is essential that you become familiar with the legal system in the United States and the legal system in the country or countries where your foreign language is spoken. Not all legal systems in every country are the same. (See: <https://guides.law.sc.edu/c.php?g=315476&p=2108388>) . Understanding the concepts behind the legal terms in the two languages you work with is the first step to becoming competent and proficient in this field.

You can work in civil and criminal matters, administrative or quasi-judicial proceedings, therefore you will need an extensive range of active vocabulary. That range includes specialized terminologies from fields as different as forensic chemistry, ballistics, animal husbandry, the oil & gas industry, or human trafficking, just to name a few.

What is your true proficiency level in your working languages? Take the test:

<https://www.masslegalservices.org/content/self-assessment-language-proficiency>

Native or near-native fluency in English and a second language is required of interpreters in the legal field.

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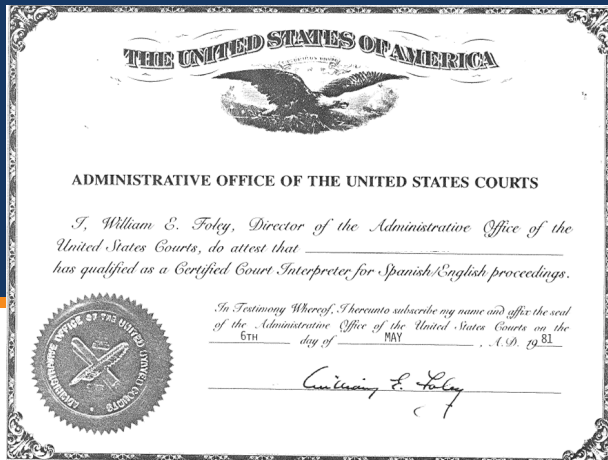


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# CERTIFICATION

In the United States, judiciary interpreters can be certified to work in state courts by the judicial branch of that state, or be certified to work in federal courts by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

To learn about the testing process for each individual state, consult directly with the state's judicial branch or consult this link of the National Center for State Courts: <https://www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/state-interpreter-certification>

To learn about the testing process for the federal courts, go to this link: <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters/federal-court-interpreter-certification-examination>

For the most part, testing instruments to become certified or licensed for work in court consist of 2 parts. The first part is a standardized written evaluation of the candidate's proficiency in English and the foreign language. If the candidate passes this exam, the second part is the oral portion, which measures skill levels in three specific competencies: sight translation, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting.

Some states require preparatory courses before taking their certification exam, others require a certain number of continuing education courses to maintain the credential.

There are many courses and programs to prepare for these certification exams, which are very rigorous. The lives, liberties, and properties of people who do not speak or understand the language of the courts depend on the competency and professionalism of the interpreters who provide their services during both criminal and civil legal proceedings.

Consult the NAJIT Resources page on our website at: <https://najit.org/resources/>.

Interpreting has many sub-specialties, of which judiciary is only one. The profession offers many opportunities for work as independent contractors or employees in the medical, education, conference and other fields, each with their own specialized terminologies and areas of targeted knowledge. We encourage you to explore and diversify your areas of expertise through a constant pursuit of knowledge and mindful enhancement of your skills.