

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO EXPLORE INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS

In the absence of performance-based evaluation, certification or credentialing of interpreter services, legal professionals must ensure competency by carefully selecting individuals to perform this service. Here are questions that legal professionals may use to ascertain whether an interpreter has sufficient expertise:

General Education:

- 1. Do you have interpreter certification from a trade organization or a governmental institution?
 - No
 - Yes 10 points (upon verification)

- 2. Do you possess a degree from an accredit college or university in the U.S. or in a country outside the U.S.?
 - No 0 points
 - Yes 1 point for partial
 - 2 points for BA/BS
 - 3 for Masters
 - 4 points for PhD
 - 5 points for MA in interpreting
 - 6 points for PhD in Interpreting

- 3. What was your area of study?
 - 1 point for sciences, arts or business
 - 2 points for poli sci
 - 3 points legal studies
 - 4 points for law or foreign language
 - 5 points interpreting or translation

- 4. Did you have any courses on linguistics, grammar or American legal studies? If so what were they?
 - No 0 points
 - Yes 1 point
 - 2 points for 2 classes
 - 3 points for 3 classes or more

- 5. Have you taken courses (not training) in interpretation or translation?
 - No 0 points
 - Yes 1 point
 - 2 points for 2 courses
 - 3 points for 3 classes or more

- 6. If so, where and what were these courses?
 - 1 point for general
 - 2 points for consecutive or sight translation
 - 3 points for simultaneous

7. Have you taken any training in interpretation or translation?

No 0 points
Yes 1 point for 5 hours or less
 2 points for 6-10 hours
 3 points for 11-25 hours
 4 points for 26-40 hours
 5 points for 41-75 hours
 6 points for 76+

8. How long have you been working as a paid interpreter?

0 points for 1st time
1 point for 1 year or less
2 points for 1-3 years
3 points for 3-5 years
4 points for 6-10 years
5 points for 10-15 years
6 points for 16+

Speaking Fluency:

- How old were you when you started speaking English?
 How old were you when you started speaking _____?
 How old were you when you left your country?
 Or how much time did you spend abroad learning _____?
 How old were you when you came to the United States?
 Or how old were you when you went abroad?
 Besides when interpreting, how often do you speak foreign language?
 And when you speak it, who do you speak it with?
 Do you use your (foreign language) in a formal setting like with professionals who speak the same language as you? If so, whom or which group? (like, medical field, engineers dignitaries, etc.)
 What do you do to keep your (foreign language) fluency?
 If you have worked in a legal setting before, how did you learn legal terminology?

Reading Fluency:

- When you read in (foreign language), what kind of material do you read?
 Do you read fiction or literature in (foreign language)?
 Do you read academic articles in (foreign language)?
 If so, in what area and how often?
 What (foreign language) newspapers do you read?
 How about magazines in (foreign language)?
 When you assemble a product or an object, do you read the instruction in English or in (your foreign language)? Why?
 Do you visit websites in (foreign language)?

- Do you have a dictionary in your own language?
- Do you have a dictionary in your own language?
- Do you have a bilingual dictionary?
- Do you have a dictionary in your own language?
- Do you have a legal dictionaries?
- If no, how do you look up words?

Legal Interpreter Training:

- How did you prepare to become a legal interpreter?
- Do you have interpreter-specific training?
- How much self-study do you do a month to prepare you for legal interpreting?
- How many hours of training do you have in civil or criminal procedure?
- How many hours of training do you have in legal terminology?
- How many hours of training do you have in the modes of interpretation?
- How many hours of training do you have on interpreter ethics?
- How many hours of advanced training do you have?
- How many hours of training do you have on idioms, slang & colloquialisms?
- How many hours of training do you have on note-taking?
- Can you list at least three canons in your code of ethics?

Legal Terminology

- Can you tell me what “accessory” means in legal terms?
- Can you tell me what an “arraignment” is?
- If a defendant is having a bench trial, what do you understand from that?
- Can you tell me what a bench warrant is?
- What is double jeopardy?
- Do you know what we mean by a “conflict of interest”?

Example:

	Candidate #1	Candidate #2	Candidate #3	Candidate #4
Certification	10	0	0	0
Degree	0	1	4	6
Area of Study	0	1	4	4
Key Courses	0	1	3	3
Interp classes	0	0	0	0
Relevancy	0	0	0	0
Training	3	4	6	6
Experience	3	2	4	6
TOTALS	16	9	21	25