



STATE OF DELAWARE  
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS  
COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM

### **Interpreter Qualification and Registration on the Court Interpreter Registry**

The Administrative Office of the Courts Court Interpreter Program (AOC CIP) is responsible for providing language services to the Judicial Branch. This includes recruiting qualified interpreters capable of delivering high quality services in a legal setting.

Individuals interested in providing interpretation services to the courts must be [certified](#) to provide the services *and* apply for [registration](#) on the Court Interpreter Registry (Registry). Certification is not a guarantee that an individual will be placed on the Registry and be able to work for the courts. There are also opportunities for individuals working towards certification to be listed on the Registry and provide limited services for the courts based on their assessed level of proficiency. Individuals interested in providing interpretation services in languages for which an oral certification exam is unavailable will be qualified by other means.

#### **A. What is a Delaware certified court interpreter?**

A Delaware court interpreter is a person who:

- Possesses native-like proficiency in English.
- At least one foreign language or American Sign Language (ASL) as assessed by a credentialing organization.
- Is skilled in all modes of interpretation.
- Abides by the Delaware Code of Professional Responsibilities for Court Interpreters.
- Has knowledge of legal terminology.
- Is current with Continuing Education requirements.
- Is familiar with court procedure and protocol.

#### **B. Delaware certification/qualification process**

An individual who has never been certified as a foreign language interpreter must complete the Delaware orientation seminar and take the written and oral proficiency examinations administered by the AOC CIP before applying for inclusion on the Registry.

Individuals certified through another State or the federal government’s foreign language certification process must attend Delaware’s orientation seminar to have their credentials considered for [reciprocity](#) before applying for inclusion on the Registry.

An individual certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc. (RID) must also attend the orientation seminar. See below for certification requirements applicable to [Interpreters for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#).

### 1. Delaware orientation seminar

The orientation seminar is the first step in the AOC CIP qualification process and must be attended by all individuals who wish to apply for inclusion on the Registry. It is a one-day seminar that introduces candidates to the court interpreter profession. The seminar covers the role of the court interpreter, ethical requirements of the profession, modes of interpretation, and an overview of criminal judicial procedure.

Orientations are offered at least once a year in all three counties. Orientations will be advertised on the [Exam Dates page](#) of the Delaware Court Interpreter Program website. A registration form will be posted with the announcement once registration is open.

If three or more years have passed since a candidate attended a Delaware Orientation Seminar, the candidate may be required to attend the Orientation again to continue with the qualification or registration process.

### 2. Written Exam

The second step in the AOC CIP foreign language qualification process is a written and oral proficiency examination developed by the National Center for State Court and administered by the AOC CIP. Information about the exams is available on the [National Center for State Courts – Written and Oral Resources](#) webpage.

The written exam consists of 135 multiple choice questions in English. The written exam measures candidates’ knowledge of the English language; court-related terms and usage; and court interpreter ethics and professional conduct. The test is administered several times a year following the orientation seminar. Only candidates who have attended the orientation seminar may take this test. Candidates must score at least 80% on the written test to proceed to the oral proficiency exam.

### 3. Oral Proficiency Exam

The Delaware AOC CIP administers standardized oral proficiency exams designed by the National Center for State Courts. The oral proficiency exam is “designed to determine whether candidates possess the minimum levels of language knowledge and interpreting skills required to perform competently during court proceedings.” See [National Center for State Courts – Court Interpreter Oral Examination: Overview](#), p. 2 (2011). The test measures candidates’ command of their language pair, as well as interpreting skills in the three modes of interpretation: simultaneous, consecutive and sight translation. Candidates who have not passed the written exam cannot take the oral proficiency exam.

Candidates may be tested in any of the languages available through the National Center for State Courts. Languages for which there are full exams include: Arabic; Cantonese; Filipino (Tagalog); French; Haitian-Creole; Hmong; Ilocano; Khmer; Korean; Laotian; Mandarin; Polish; Portuguese; Russian; Spanish; and Vietnamese. Languages for which there are abbreviated exams include: Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian and Turkish.

Individuals speaking a language for which there is no standardized oral exam may be evaluated through an oral proficiency interview and will be listed as a conditionally approved interpreter on the Registry if they are successful (see [Conditionally Approved](#) below).

The full oral proficiency exam consists of three separate parts:

- Sight translation, which is broken into two subparts:
  - English language document verbally translated by sight into the foreign language (must score 70% or more for certification).
  - Foreign language document verbally translated by sight into English (must score 70% or more for certification).
- Consecutive interpretation of oral testimony from English into the foreign language and from the foreign language into English (must score 70% or more for certification).
- Simultaneous interpreting from English into the foreign language (must score 70% or more for certification).

The AOC CIP may consider a candidate's request for a rescoring of an oral proficiency exam taken in Delaware only if these three conditions are met:

- The candidate requests rescoring within 30 calendar days from the date when the AOC CIP mailed the candidate's test scores.
- The candidate scored a minimum of 68% on each part and subpart of the exam.
- The candidate is responsible for all costs associated with the rescore. (Note: rescoring is costly.)

Individuals working towards certification may still apply for inclusion on the Registry if they fall into the following two categories:

A ***conditionally approved interpreter*** is an individual who sat for the 3-part oral proficiency exam in their language combination and obtained a minimum overall score of 60%, scoring 70% in at least one part, and achieves scores of or above 55% in the remaining two parts and subparts. A conditionally approved interpreter must take all three parts of the oral proficiency exam when offered until they pass. If after three attempts the conditionally approved interpreter does not reach the certified interpreter category, they may have to submit proof of additional training before taking the oral proficiency exam again.

Conditionally approved interpreters include interpreters in languages for which there is no standardized nationwide oral proficiency exam. Such interpreters are qualified by means of English and foreign language Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI) developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and administered by [Language Testing International](#) (LTI). The OPI is conducted, recorded, and rated by ACTFL certified proficiency testers through a telephone-based interview session. Candidates must perform at the "advanced

high” or “superior” level to be included in the Registry and must agree to take a full or partial oral proficiency exam in their foreign language when one becomes available.

A *registered candidate* is an individual who sat for the 3-part oral proficiency exam in their language with a minimum overall score of 50% overall and no individual scores under 50% in the parts and subparts of the oral exam. Registered candidates who fail to become certified or conditionally approved after two years may have to submit proof of additional training in court interpreting before retaking the oral proficiency exam.

#### 4. Certification for Interpreters for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The AOC CIP does not certify Deaf or Hard of Hearing interpreters but recognizes certification issued by the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.](#) (RID), including the SC:L certification. Interpreters applying for inclusion on the Registry must provide proof of valid certification, such as a copy of a current RID card.

### C. Court Interpreter Registry

Certified individuals who wish to interpret in the courts must apply for registration on the Court Interpreter Registry. Courts will only use interpreters listed on the Registry. A copy of the application is available upon request by emailing [info\\_cip@delaware.gov](mailto:info_cip@delaware.gov).

The Registry is maintained by the AOC CIP and updated annually or as necessary. The Registry lists foreign language interpreters and Deaf and Hard of Hearing interpreters separately. Foreign language interpreters are grouped by language spoken and then listed alphabetical based on their level of certification, with certified interpreters listed first, followed by conditionally approved interpreters, and registered candidates listed last. Interpreters for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing are listed in alphabetical order as they appear in the RID interpreter member database.

#### 1. Application process

An individual applying for inclusion on the Registry must complete the application, which includes the following requirements:

- Attend a one or two-day [orientation seminar](#).
- Foreign language interpreters must successfully complete a criterion-based, English-only written exam and oral proficiency exam.
- Have proof of certification, such as the copy of the AOC [written and oral proficiency exam results](#) letters with your test results, or the copy of a [valid RID card](#).
- Clear a [criminal background check](#) as required by the Judicial Branch.
- Provide a most recent copy of their resume.
- Submit proof of registration as a Delaware vendor through the [Delaware Division of Accounting e-Supplier Portal](#).
- Submit a valid Delaware business license for General Services, see the State of Delaware [one-stop](#) webpage and any other licenses required by the municipality or county where the professional services will be performed.

### *i. Criminal background check*

Upon receipt of the application, the AOC CIP will instruct applicants on how to obtain their criminal background history. Only applicants that clear the criminal background check will be allowed to interpret in the Delaware Courts. The AOC CIP will notify candidates of a negative result.

### *ii. Court interpreter qualifications*

The Registry has three categories of foreign language interpreters – certified interpreter, conditionally approved interpreter, and registered candidate – and the RID certified Deaf and Hard of Hearing interpreters.

### *iii. Reciprocity*

The AOC CIP may accept applications from out-of-state interpreters in languages for which there is a shortage of interpreters. Spoken language interpreters from other jurisdictions who have obtained certification through another Consortium-member state or the Administrative Office of the United States Federal Courts and who wish to work in Delaware may apply for reciprocity.

To be considered for listing on the Registry, interpreters must:

- Submit a letter on official letterhead from the Program Manager of the state/federal program in which they obtained certification. This letter must:
  - Verify that the interpreter attended an orientation session and completed the state/federal’s credentialing or qualifying process.
  - Include copies of the written and oral proficiency exam scores. Scores obtained from an AOC CIP-recognized credentialing organization must be comparable to Delaware’s qualifying scores for reciprocity to be granted.
- Attend a Delaware Orientation Seminar.
- Enter into a services agreement with the AOC.
- Agree to the AOC CIP Uniform Payment Schedule for services provided.
- Comply with all Delaware Court Interpreter Program policies and procedures.

## 2. Registration

An applicant approved for inclusion on the Registry will be offered a contract to provide services in accordance with AOC CIP program requirement to the courts based on a fee schedule established by the AOC CIP program.

### **D. Court Interpreter Registry continued requirements**

An interpreter listed on the Registry must comply with the following to maintain active status on the Registry:

- Continuing Education Credit requirements described in the AOC CIP’s Continuing Education Policy as outlined below.

- Maintain applicable business licenses and professional insurance coverage.
- Court Interpreter Code of Professional Ethics.
- Court Interpreter Policies and Procedures Sheet.

## 1. Continuing Education Requirements

Foreign Language interpreters who are registered with the AOC CIP must complete 12 hours of continuing education (CE) in a 24-months period and report the number of continuing education units (CEU) to the AOC CIP every two years, 2 months before the requirement period ends. Of these 12 credits, at least 3 must be on Ethics and 3 others on Skills-Building modes of interpretation. Continuing education credits may be obtained through programs approved by the AOC CIP, such as the Consortium for State Court Interpreters Certification Skills Building Workshops, NAJIT/ATA conferences, educational programs offered by colleges or universities, or training programs offered by other Consortium-member states. For more information on how to earn and report CEUs, please see the FAQs and Delaware Court Interpreter Continuing Education Handbook available on the [Delaware Court Interpreter Program Continuing Education](#) webpage.

Interpreters for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing must complete the CEU requirements of the RID Certification Maintenance Program (CMP) and provide a transcript of professional development to the Delaware Court Interpreter Program Coordinator. More information on how to earn CEUs can be viewed on the [RID CEUs webpage](#).

Failure to complete the required CE credits in the prescribed period may result in the removal of the interpreter's name from the Registry's list of active interpreters.

## 2. Licensure and insurance requirements

Interpreters are responsible for maintaining and renewing applicable state and local business licenses and professional insurance coverage as applicable.

## E. Questions

Questions about certification, your credentials, or the program should be addressed to the AOC CIP (Court Interpreter Program) Coordinator via email at [info\\_cip@delaware.gov](mailto:info_cip@delaware.gov).