



INDIANA SUPREME COURT

# Guidelines for Court Interpreters & Candidates

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Guidelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Indiana Office of Judicial Administration.

# Table of Contents

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Steps to Certification/Qualification.....	3
American Sign Language Interpreters.....	4
Written Exam Overview.....	4
Oral Exam Overview – Step 6(a).....	5
Abbreviated Oral Exam – Step 6(b).....	5
Oral Proficiency Interview – Step 6(c).....	5
Borrowing Practice Materials.....	6
Exam Cancellations.....	6
Oral Exam Re-Grades.....	6
Registration Fees.....	6
Reciprocity.....	7
National Center for State Courts’ Criteria for Reciprocity on the Oral Examination Score.....	7
Updating Contact Information.....	8
Getting Work after Certification.....	8
Resources.....	8

The Indiana Supreme Court Interpreter Certification Program is not a comprehensive training program. Individuals seeking certification should already have training and experience in interpretation. Before seeking certification, please review the [National Center for State Court’s \(NCSC\) self-assessment guide](#). If a language is not on the [list of available NCSC oral examinations](#), a candidate is likely eligible to become a Qualified Interpreter rather than a Certified Interpreter.

## Steps to Certification/Qualification

Candidates must complete the entire Indiana Supreme Court Interpreter Certification Program within two (2) years of starting the orientation (step # 2 below) to become a credentialed court interpreter in Indiana. Candidates may choose to complete the steps outlined below either In-Person or via the Online Course options.

A candidate is not eligible to participate in the Indiana Supreme Court Interpreter Certification Program if the candidate has been disciplined by the Indiana Supreme Court or any of its programs or agencies, or any other state's Supreme Court or any of its programs or agencies. Conviction of a felony or a misdemeanor involving dishonesty or false statement shall disqualify a candidate from certification if the conviction is ten years old or less.

In-Person Course & Testing	Online Courses & Testing
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Register for the Orientation/Written Exam or Retake of Written Exam</a> and pay the fees</li> <li>2. Attend the two-day orientation covering interpreter ethics, protocol, basic criminal procedure, and the three modes of interpretation used in the courtroom</li> <li>3. Pass the Written Exam covering vocabulary, criminal procedure, and court interpreter ethics with a score of 80% or better</li> <li>4. Attend the two-day skills building seminar that covers sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation</li> <li>5. Attend the one-day simultaneous workshop</li> <li>6. Pass oral exam               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pass all three sections of the NCSC approved interpreter certification Oral Exam with a score of 70% or better on</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Register for the Orientation/Written Exam or Retake of Written Exam</a> and pay the fees</li> <li>2. Complete Part 1(a): 16-hour orientation course covering self-assessment, interpreter ethics, protocol, basic criminal procedures, and the three modes of interpretation</li> <li>3. Complete Part 1(b): 10-hour written exam prep covering synonyms/antonyms, sentence comprehension, idioms, and test strategies</li> <li>4. Pass the Written Exam covering vocabulary, criminal procedure, and court interpreter ethics with a score of 80% or better</li> <li>5. Complete Part 2: 40-hour skills building and oral exam preparation course</li> <li>6. Pass oral exam               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pass all three sections of the NCSC approved interpreter certification Oral Exam with a score of 70% or better on</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

each section: sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation (OR)

- b. Pass the NCSC Abbreviated Oral Exam (Turkish and Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian), and the English Proficiency Exam (OR)
  - c. For languages not available for the NCSC Oral Exam, score Superior or higher in the Oral Proficiency Interview
7. Submit to and pass a criminal background check
  8. Sign a disclosure of contact information providing a valid phone number and email to be listed on the [Certified Interpreter Registry](#)
  9. Sign an oath promising to comply with the Indiana Supreme Court [Interpreter Code of Conduct and Procedure](#)

each section: sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation (OR)

- b. Pass the NCSC Abbreviated Oral Exam (Turkish and Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian), and the English Proficiency Exam (OR)
  - c. For languages not available for NCSC Oral Exam, score Superior or higher in the Oral Proficiency Interview
7. Submit to and pass a criminal background check
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  9. Sign an oath promising to comply with the Indiana Supreme Court [Interpreter Code of Conduct and Procedure](#)

## American Sign Language Interpreters

If seeking qualification in American Sign Language, the last training event is skills building. Previously issued RID certification must be submitted at this event.

## Written Exam Overview

The English Written Exam contains 135 multiple-choice questions and measures a candidate's knowledge of the following areas central to the work of a court interpreter:

- **English language:** Interpreters must have a high degree of proficiency in the English language and familiarity with a range of language constructions. Comprehension of written English vocabulary and common English idioms will be tested.
- **Court-related terms and usage:** Interpreters must be familiar with the terminology and procedures of the court system. Recognition of common court-related situations and vocabulary will be tested.
- **Ethics and professional conduct:** Interpreters must have general knowledge of ethical standards guiding the performance of duties. Questions will be aimed at measuring knowledge of ethical behavior and professional conduct.

## **Oral Exam Overview – Step 6(a)**

The Oral Exam tests proficiency in the three modes of interpretation used in the courts:

- sight translations
- consecutive interpretation
- simultaneous interpretation

A candidate must achieve a score of 70% or better on each section of the test to pass, scoring no lower than 65% on either of the two sight translation portions. Tests are given individually, tape recorded, and scored by two federally certified interpreters who are trained and approved as raters.

Candidates do not need to pass all three portions of the oral exam in one sitting and may retake the sections they did not pass when the next oral exam is offered. Failure to pass within two years of starting the orientation will result in having to restart the program.

## **Abbreviated Oral Exam – Step 6(b)**

NCSC offers abbreviated oral exams in Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian and Turkish languages. To be certified in these languages, an additional English Proficiency Exam is required. This Exam will be administered along with the abbreviated oral exam. The English proficiency exam is a Listening and Speaking Test administered via telephone and consists of 22 questions requiring the candidate to respond in English. This test takes approximately 15-20 minutes.

## **Oral Proficiency Interview – Step 6(c)**

For languages not available for the NCSC Oral Exam, a candidate must pass with a score of Superior or the highest level in the Oral Proficiency Interview. The oral proficiency interview may consist of a Legal Interpretation Test and English Listening and Speaking Test or Listening and Speaking Test in both English and the target language.

- The Legal Interpretation Test is administered via telephone and consists of a pre-scripted dialogue. The candidate interprets after each segment of dialogue.
- The Listening and Speaking Test is administered via telephone and consists of 22 questions requiring the candidate to respond in the same language. This test takes approximately 15-20 minutes.

A candidate must score Superior or the highest level in the oral proficiency interview to pass. Failure to pass within two years of starting the orientation (step #2 above) will result in having to restart the program.

# Borrowing Practice Materials

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Candidates admitted to the program who are seeking certification are permitted to borrow training materials from the Indiana Office of Court Services to prepare for the oral exam. These materials are distributed during skills building and must be returned the week of the oral exams. Candidates will be charged \$80 for lost or damaged materials. If materials are not returned at the appropriate time without explanation, the Indiana Office of Court Services will assume that the materials are lost.

# Exam Cancellations

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A candidate who wishes to cancel a scheduled oral exam, oral proficiency interview, or English proficiency test should contact Court Interpreter Program staff at [interpreter@courts.in.gov](mailto:interpreter@courts.in.gov) at least one week prior to the exam date to avoid paying administrative fees.

# Oral Exam Re-Grades

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Oral exams are graded by two certified raters who are certified through the National Center for State Courts. Every effort is made to grade exams accurately and thoroughly. Accordingly, re-grading of exams is discouraged. From time to time, candidates seek an oral exam re-grade. A candidate may seek a re-grade of an oral exam within 90 days of receiving the results *only if the candidate passed two of the three sections of the test and has come within 5 points of a passing score on the remaining section*. The candidate will be required to pay all expenses associated with the re-grade.

# Registration Fees

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Current registration fees can be found on the [registration page](#). No candidate will be admitted to an event before receipt of payment. Payment in the form of a check or money order must be postmarked by the registration deadline for each event and sent with tracking to:

Indiana Supreme Court  
Office of Judicial Administration  
Court Interpreter Certification Program  
Attn: Fiscal Department  
251 N. Illinois St., Suite 1600  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

*No Refund. A \$25 late fee will be assessed for all returned checks.*

# Reciprocity

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Persons possessing out-of-state court interpreter certification may apply for state reciprocity by submitting a [Request for Reciprocity Form](#) with the Indiana Supreme Court's Office of Judicial Administration. The following conditions must be met.

1. Reciprocity is available to out-of-state certified interpreters with Federal Certification or State Certification from National Center for State Courts Interpreter Consortium member states.
2. Reciprocity will be considered and may be granted on a case-by-case basis.
3. The applicant must file a Request for Reciprocity.
4. The out-of-state certification is current in the issuing state or federal program at the time of the Request for Reciprocity.
5. The out-of-state certificate is not a temporary, alternative, or conditional certification.
6. The applicant must have completed the orientation seminar, skills-building, and simultaneous workshops, or other similar trainings.
7. The applicant must have passed both the NCSC Written and Oral Exams as outlined in this document.
8. The applicant successfully passes a criminal history check with the Indiana State Police.
9. The applicant takes a sworn oath to uphold the Indiana Court Interpreter Code of Ethics.

## **National Center for State Courts' Criteria for Reciprocity on the Oral Examination Score**

1. Completed the entire test within one testing cycle
2. Scored at least 70% on all three sections, scoring no lower than 65% of either of the two sight translation portions
3. Completed the entire test within one state
4. Did not take the same version of the exam more than two times
5. Did not take the same version of a test form more than once in a period of ten months

# Updating Contact Information

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Certified/Qualified court interpreters should update any changes in name, address, email using the Court Interpreter Online Portal. This will ensure that the certified interpreter continues to receive important updates and that current contact information is listed on the Certified Interpreter Registry. Failure to provide a valid phone number and email will result in immediate removal from the Registry.

If you need access to the portal, please email [interpreter@courts.in.gov](mailto:interpreter@courts.in.gov).

# Getting Work after Certification

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Please be aware that certification does not constitute a guarantee of employment. Currently, some Indiana courts employ independent contractors for court interpretation while other Indiana courts utilize the services of staff court interpreters or agency interpreters. Therefore, the possible income for a court interpreter can vary.

Factors affecting the availability of work for independent contractors include the volume of cases requiring interpretation in a specific language, the employment policies of the applicable court, and the availability of certified interpreters in each locality. [Contact the local courthouse](#) to find out how interpreters are hired in each county.

# Resources

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- [National Center for State Courts](#)
- [Federal Court Interpreter Certification Exam](#)
- [National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators](#)
- [American Translators Association](#)
- [Midwest Association of Translators & Interpreters](#)
- [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf](#)

For questions about these administrative policies or the program, please contact Court Interpreter Program staff at [interpreter@courts.in.gov](mailto:interpreter@courts.in.gov).