



# JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

COURT INTERPRETERS  
ADVISORY PANEL

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## COURT INTERPRETERS ADVISORY PANEL

### MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING

January 18, 2023  
12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.  
Videoconference

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**Advisory Body Members Present:** Hon. Brian L. McCabe (committee chair), Mr. Hany M. Farag, Mr. Tam “Tyler” T. Nguyen, Ms. Carol M. Palacio, Mr. Chris Ruhl, Hon. Maurice Sanchez, Ms. Angie Birchfield, Mr. Mark Crossley, Ms. M. Luisa McEwen, Ms. Shirley Luo, Hon. Michael P. Pulos.

**Advisory Body Members Absent:** Mr. Hector Gonzalez, Jr., Ms. Iris Van Hemert, Ms. Amelia Loera

**Others Present:** Mr. Douglas Denton, Ms. Claudia Ortega, Mr. Juan Palomares, Mx. Kaytlin Hancock, Ms. Cynthia Miranda

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#### OPEN MEETING

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##### Call to Order and Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 12:26 p.m. and roll call was taken by Mx. Kaytlin Hancock.

##### Approval of Minutes

The advisory body reviewed and approved the minutes of the May 24, 2022, Court Interpreters Advisory Panel meeting.

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#### DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS (ITEMS 1-1)

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##### Item 1

##### 2023 Annual Agenda

CIAP reviewed the 2023 Annual Agenda and its projects presented by Ms. Claudia Ortega and Mx. Kaytlin Hancock. The committee reviewed the following projects: Compliance Requirements for Certified Court and Registered Interpreter, Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters, Passage and Credentialing Options for the Interpreting Examinations, Interpreting Skills Assessment Process, Requirements for New American Sign Language (ASL) Court Interpreters, and Designation of Certain Languages as Certified and Registered. No changes were made to the Annual Agenda.

Discussion:

When discussing the designation of certain languages project, some concerns were raised regarding the de-designation of the Portuguese language from certified to registered, with a request for the collected data regarding the use of Portuguese in courtrooms in California being made.

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**A D J O U R N M E N T**

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There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Approved by the advisory body on enter date.

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**Title:**       **Testing and Certification of American Sign Language (ASL) Court Interpreters**

**Date:**       February 22, 2023

**Contact:**   Douglas G. Denton, Principal Manager, Language Access Services Program;  
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**Executive Summary**

The Court Interpreters Advisory Panel recommends the Judicial Council approve the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) as a recognized testing entity for American Sign Language (ASL) court interpreter certification and recognize holders of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification through reciprocity to increase the number of qualified ASL court interpreters for California in a cost-effective manner.

**Recommendation**

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) recommends that CIAP consider the following approaches to address the need for qualified ASL court interpreters in the California courts:

1. Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize the Texas DHHS BEI as a recognized testing entity for ASL court interpreter certification for four years;
2. Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize holders and passers of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification who apply through reciprocity to be added to the Judicial Council Master List to expand California’s pool of ASL court interpreters;
3. Seek approval from the Judicial Council for CIAP to undertake further development towards recognition of persons with ASL generalist credentials to perform work in the courts, which may include California court-specific training requirements; and
4. Seek approval from the Judicial Council to sunset the current *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons* and implement a process for approving certification programs that is more responsive to the current interpreter marketplace and testing and certification landscape.

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**Relevant Previous Council Action**

In accordance with California Rules of Court, rule 10.51, the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel makes recommendations to the Judicial Council regarding the “...certification, registration, renewal of certification and registration, testing, recruiting, training, continuing education, and professional conduct of interpreters.”<sup>1</sup>

California Evidence Code section 754 has, since the enactment of SB 2046 (1990 Cal Stats. ch. 1450), contained a provision that requires the Judicial Council to undertake a public process to develop guidelines for the approval of testing entities for the certification of court interpreters for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing and to approve one or more entities to certify these interpreters for work in the California courts. These guidelines were initially developed and approved on February 21, 1992. The current [\*Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons\*](#) were last updated in 2009 and are included as Attachment 1.

On November 5, 1996, the Judicial Council provisionally approved two entities for the certification of interpreters for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals: the California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf (CCASD) and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).<sup>2</sup> Final approval of these entities was given on April 24, 1998.

Formal reviews of the certifying entities were undertaken in 1999, 2006, 2009, and 2013. On October 20, 2006, CIAP recommended the removal of CCASD as an authorized entity as they were no longer testing and certifying interpreters, and the retention of RID as an authorized entity. The 2006 review also noted the development by RID of the Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) certification for American Sign Language, which is a legal specialist certification for sign language interpreters.<sup>3</sup>

On December 15, 2009, the Judicial Council reauthorized RID as an approved entity for testing and certification of ASL court interpreters for another four years. This review also included amendments to the guidelines and a proposal to extend the review from every two years to every four years. In addition, the Judicial Council voted to delegate to the Administrative Director the authorization of entities to test and certify court interpreters for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, based on the guidelines established by the Judicial Council.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index.cfm?title=ten&linkid=rule10\\_51](https://www.courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index.cfm?title=ten&linkid=rule10_51)

<sup>2</sup> The RID is a leading organization in the area of best practices and professional development in ASL interpreting services whose mission is to establish a national standard of quality for interpreters and transliterators.

<sup>3</sup> The SC:L was available from 1998 until January 1, 2016, when its moratorium went into effect. Holders of the SC:L demonstrated specialized knowledge of legal settings and greater familiarity with language used in the legal system. More information at <https://rid.org/rid-certification-overview/certifications-under-moratorium/>.

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On October 24, 2013, the delegation of this authority to the Administrative Director was extended. RID maintained its status as the sole entity authorized to test and certify court sign language interpreters for work in the California courts.

In 2016, RID stopped awarding the SC:L credential for ASL court interpreters. While the SC:L exam is no longer administered anywhere nationally, the SC:L credential, which was offered from 1998–2015, is currently the only credential recognized by the Judicial Council of California for ASL court interpreter certification.

**Analysis/Rationale**

California, like many other states, has a statewide need for more qualified ASL court interpreters.<sup>4</sup> The *2020 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* recommended that “[t]he Judicial Council should explore and develop a recommended credentialing process for certification as a California ASL [American Sign Language] court interpreter.”

The most recent *Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*,<sup>5</sup> completed and released in May 2020, indicates that ASL is the third most requested language in the state, with 38,460 interpreted events reported between FY 2014–15 to FY 2017–18. However, recent outreach by the Court Interpreters Program (CIP) determined that only 31 of 55 ASL court interpreters on the council’s Master List are self-reported as active (26 are active with SC:L, and five are active with a formerly offered California credential).

In an effort to address the need for a new credentialing solution for ASL court interpreters in California, the council contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to provide research and findings on credentialing options, including the use of existing testing instruments as well as non-testing options, such as training and portfolio requirements, that may be considered by the council for use in California to credential or qualify ASL court interpreters.

To support this effort, NCSC conducted national research regarding peer state court solutions for qualifying ASL court interpreters, which included the review of the use of available testing options as well as training and other requirements.

NCSC also facilitated several one-hour focus groups and interviews via Zoom with a range of stakeholders, including credentialed ASL court interpreters, Deaf court interpreters, ASL court interpreter training experts, ASL court interpreter candidates, and representatives from

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to an ASL court interpreter, the court may also appoint a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) to act as the “intermediary interpreter” between the individual who is Deaf or hard-of-hearing and the ASL court interpreter. (See Evid. Code section 754(e) and (g)).

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/2020-Language-Need-and-Interpreter-Use-Study-Report-to-the-Legislature.pdf>.

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organizations serving the d/Deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) communities.<sup>6</sup> The focus group interviews were designed to obtain information on current national and local efforts to qualify ASL court interpreters, as well as to identify foundational training content that could be considered by the Judicial Council of California for possible ASL court interpreter trainings.

NCSC presented its research findings to the CIAP Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee (“subcommittee”), which was charged with undertaking the 2022 CIAP Annual Agenda project to “consider recommended ASL interpreter certifications, that are currently issued by other entities, that could be accepted by the council and that would be required before a new ASL interpreter can interpret for the California court system.” The subcommittee, which was chaired by Judge Teresa Magno, met on March 29, 2022, and September 13, 2022, to review the findings.<sup>7</sup> To identify possible testing and non-testing ASL credentialing options used by other states, NCSC reviewed publicly available information published by states on their ASL credentialing requirements. While state credentialing requirements for ASL interpreters vary across the country, research findings indicate that many states, like California, continue to recognize the SC:L as a valid certification for ASL court interpreters. However, in response to the elimination of the SC:L testing process, as well as the limited number of available ASL court interpreters with the SC:L, many states have also adopted other testing and non-testing options to recognize or classify other ASL interpreters for work in the courts in their states.

The majority of state models reviewed share common elements, including: (1) the continued recognition of the SC:L as the highest level of certification for ASL court interpreters and (2) lower classification tiers for ASL court interpreters with ASL generalist (not-court interpreter-specific) credentials. Models differ with regard to the recognition of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification exam for the highest level of certification, with several states that recognize the BEI Court Interpreter Certification exam in addition to the SC:L. At this time, the BEI certification from Texas remains the only legal terminology-based testing option available for certification as an ASL court interpreter in the United States.

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<sup>6</sup> “[T]he word deaf usually refers to an individual with very little or no functional hearing and who often uses sign language to communicate. Hard of hearing refers to an individual who has a mild-to-moderate hearing loss who may communicate through sign language, spoken language, or both.” (<https://deaftec.org/stem-employment/for-employers-resources-for-hiring-and-inclusion/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-some-definitions/>); “We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture.” (Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (1988), <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/community-and-culture-frequently-asked-questions/>)

<sup>7</sup> See meeting materials at [https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/032922\\_ILAS\\_Open\\_Mtg\\_Materials.pdf](https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/032922_ILAS_Open_Mtg_Materials.pdf) and [https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/091322\\_ILAS\\_Open\\_Mtg\\_Materials.pdf](https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/091322_ILAS_Open_Mtg_Materials.pdf).

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Additionally, states have various additional training and performance requirements for interpreters and formats for providing such requirements for interpreters with lower-level classifications.

The subcommittee discussed that California may be able to address the current shortage of ASL court interpreters by developing a two-prong approach that would first address immediate needs by allowing recognition of the SC:L and Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification exam through reciprocity to expand the number of available ASL court interpreters, and second, to continue further development by the subcommittee to create a pathway in California for interpreters with a generalist ASL credential to receive legal training and complete portfolio requirements in order to receive a court-qualified status, enabling them to work in the courts.<sup>8</sup>

**Recommendation 1**

*Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) as a recognized testing entity for ASL court interpreter certification for four years.*

The Texas Board of Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Court Interpreter Certification is the only currently administered *court-specific* exam process for ASL court interpreters in the United States. The BEI Court Interpreter Certification exam is part of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) BEI certification program and has been developed specifically for certifying the skill level of individuals seeking to become certified ASL court interpreters in Texas. Upon careful review initiated by a CIAP subcommittee and additionally reviewed by the advisory panel as a whole, CIAP determined that the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification is comparable to the SC:L and tests for proficiency as an ASL court interpreter (see Attachment 2).

**Recommendation 2**

*Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize holders and passers of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification who apply through reciprocity to be added to the Judicial Council Master List to expand California's pool of ASL court interpreters.*

There are approximately 150 ASL court interpreters who hold the Texas BEI certification. In addition to Texas, the following states recognize BEI Court Interpreter Certification: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wisconsin. These states currently grant

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<sup>8</sup> Interpreters for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing are governed under California Evidence Code 754. Subsection (f) of the code allows the council to designate testing entities for ASL court interpreters: “(f) For purposes of this section, “qualified interpreter” means an interpreter who has been certified as competent to interpret court proceedings by a testing organization, agency, or educational institution approved by the Judicial Council as qualified to administer tests to court interpreters for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.” Thus, the council may recognize the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) as qualified to administer tests to court interpreters for individuals who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

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reciprocity for ASL court interpreters with the BEI Court Interpreter Certification, qualifying them to work in the courts in their respective states. Through reciprocity, California would also be able to expand its pool of qualified ASL court interpreters to assist litigants with in-person or remote interpretation.

**Recommendation 3**

*Seek approval from the Judicial Council for CIAP to undertake further development towards recognition of persons with ASL generalist credentials to perform work in the courts, which may include California court-specific training requirements.*

Recognition of persons with an ASL generalist credential is an issue that will require further development by the subcommittee and CIAP. Other ASL court interpreter credentialing options include the recognition of ASL generalist exams that are not court-specific, but that indicate an interpreter has requisite skills for interpretation in other settings. Attachment 3 contains a table with examples of specific generalist ASL credentials that are accepted by other states. Requirements vary by state, but several states permit ASL interpreters with generalist (non-court-specific) credentials to be qualified in their states for work in the courts.<sup>9</sup> In recognizing these non-court-specific credentials, they place ASL interpreters with generalist credentials in lower tiers of classification than those with court-specific licenses, and require or offer court specific trainings, orientations, observations, or mentorships to assist these ASL interpreters with generalist credentials to work in the courts.

In conjunction with exploring this credentialing option, CIAP will likely need to review Evidence Code section 754(f) to see if minor amendments are required that would allow for these other solutions permitted by other states, such as lower classification tiers for ASL court interpreters with ASL generalist (not court interpreter-specific) credentials. As noted, these states combine the ASL generalist credential with training and portfolio requirements that prepare the interpreter for working in the courts, which increases court user access to ASL interpreters and also creates a pathway for persons to seek ASL court interpreter certification in the future.

**Recommendation 4**

*Seek approval from the Judicial Council to sunset the current Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons and implement a process for approving certification programs that is more responsive to the current interpreter marketplace and testing and certification landscape.*

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, New Mexico requirements for sign language interpreters at <https://nmcenterforlanguageaccess.org/cms/en/training/court-interpreter-certification>.



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Evidence Code section 754(h)(1), which required the council to conduct a study and publish guidelines for approval of ASL court interpreter testing entities, was adopted in the 1990's when there were available ASL court interpreter testing entities in California. The guidelines, last updated in 2009, were approved by the council and were based on business needs and testing requirements at that time. They include staff interaction with and expectations for ASL court interpreter testing entities that administered ASL court interpreter examinations in California. Due to changes in business practice and the current testing landscape, the guidelines no longer align with the ability to provide continued administration, Judicial Council staffing, or expectations for an outside entity that is not under contract with the council (e.g., "The certifying organization shall provide to the Judicial Council all evidence required to document compliance with these guidelines."). As discussed in this report, NCSC used publicly available information and CIP conducted direct outreach to administrators of the Texas program to confirm certain key elements of their testing program (see Attachments 2 and 4). It may be more appropriate for CIP to develop a more modern application form/checklist that can be completed by potential and approved ASL court interpreter testing entities at regular four-year intervals, including asking the provider to provide links to publicly available documents or specific program information (e.g., exam content and description, testing procedures, application and scoring processes, complaint processes, and continuing education requirements), in order to verify that the testing entity meets minimum requirements for recognition of an ASL court interpreter testing program.

**Comments**

This proposal will circulate for public comment.

**Alternatives Considered**

Judicial Council staff explored the possibility of creating a California ASL court interpreter examination, but concluded that the startup, maintenance, and staffing necessary to launch and administer such an examination on an ongoing basis would be time consuming and cost prohibitive. At this time, current funding and staffing resources for the Language Access Services Program cannot support the development, piloting, launch, ongoing maintenance and evaluation, and staffing necessary for the administration of a California examination for ASL court interpreters.

**Fiscal and Operational Impacts**

Recognition of the Texas BEI through reciprocity would not result in any cost to the courts or council. Courts would be able to hire persons that have either the SC:L or Texas BEI credential, which will help to expand the pool of qualified interpreters that can serve ASL litigants.

NCSC is currently under contract with the Language Access Services Program to develop an online course that will be available for ASL interpreters who wish to work in the California

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courts. The course is anticipated to be available later in 2023. Findings from the NCSC research, including focus group findings, will help inform this course and future training efforts.

Staff confirmed that Texas will recognize persons that have passed the California Written Examination, which is a prerequisite for the Texas BEI Court Interpreter credential. The Written Examination in English for potential interpreters is the same NCSC examination whether administered in Texas or California, so persons who have taken and passed the Written Examination in California will not need to retake the Written Examination in Texas. Persons interested in taking the Texas BEI Court Interpreter examination will need to schedule and travel to Texas to take the required examination(s). See Attachment 4 for additional information that Judicial Council staff obtained from Texas staff.

Judicial Council staff would need to create enrollment forms for adding persons through reciprocity to the Judicial Council Master List of Interpreters, as well as develop information for existing or prospective passers of the Texas BEI for placement on the California Courts website. Council staff also recommend that existing ASL court interpreters and new interpreters added through reciprocity pay the \$100 annual interpreter renewal fee, so that the program can more accurately track the number, status, and contact information for ASL court interpreters that are on the Master List. Fees collected will be deposited to the Court Interpreters' Fund, which gathers annual renewal payments from spoken-language interpreters and supports interpreter training and other program efforts.

**Attachments and Links**

**Attachment 1:** *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons* (2009)

**Attachment 2:** SC:L and BEI Court Interpreter Certification Information

**Attachment 3:** Table: ASL Generalist Examinations Accepted by Some States

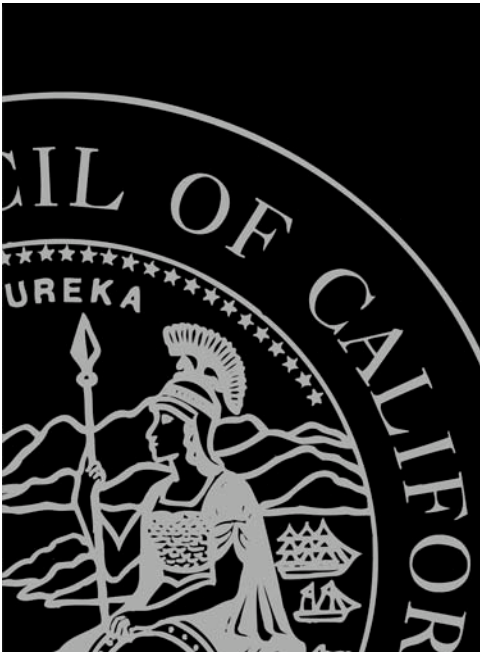
**Attachment 4:** Additional Information Obtained by Judicial Council Staff from Texas

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**Attachment 1**

*Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for  
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons (2009)*

DRAFT



# **Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard- of-Hearing Persons**

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ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
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# **Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons**

## **The Judicial Council of California**

### ***Preamble***

Evidence Code section 754 requires that in any civil or criminal action, including any action involving a traffic or other infraction or any juvenile court proceeding, or any proceeding to determine the mental competency of a person, or any administrative hearing, where a party or witness is a deaf or hard-of-hearing person and the deaf or hard-of-hearing person is present and participating, the proceeding shall be interpreted in a language that the deaf or hard-of-hearing person understands by a qualified interpreter appointed by the court or other appropriate authority. A “qualified interpreter” is defined as an interpreter who has been certified as competent to interpret court proceedings by a testing organization, agency, or educational institution approved by the Judicial Council as qualified to administer tests to court interpreters for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Evidence Code section 754 further requires the Judicial Council to establish guidelines pursuant to which it will determine which testing organizations, agencies, or educational institutions will be approved to administer tests and certify court interpreters for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons and provides that an initial approval of testing entities shall occur prior to July 1, 1992. The Judicial Council, therefore, establishes the following guidelines.

In these guidelines, the term “certified court interpreter” is used to mean a sign language interpreter who is certified to interpret in court proceedings. “Certifying organization” refers to the entity under whose auspices the evaluation of applicant interpreters is conducted. “Evaluating panel/board” refers to the actual persons who rate the applicant interpreters. “Oral” interpreting, services to hard-of-hearing individuals such as assistive listening devices, interpreting for deaf/blind individuals, and other forms of communicative assistance to persons with hearing disabilities are not covered by these guidelines.

### ***Guidelines***

#### **I. Structure and Administration of Evaluating Panels/Boards**

- A. The evaluating panel/board and its processes shall be administratively independent of the certifying organization in the testing and certification of individual applicants, that is, the panel/board shall be free of influence from any external sources on decisions affecting the test results and certification of interpreters.
- B. The certifying organization in all of its processes shall not discriminate among applicants for certification as to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or marital status and shall include statements on nondiscrimination in every announcement of the certification program. The certifying organization shall provide for access and reasonable accommodation to the testing process for persons with disabilities.
- C. The certifying organization shall possess the knowledge and experience necessary to conduct the testing and certification of court interpreters.
- D. The certifying organization shall have a formal procedure for the selection of evaluating panel/board members that includes input from certified interpreters and deaf individuals who possess the knowledge and experience required for that purpose.

- E. The certifying organization shall have formal procedures for training of evaluating panel/board members which ensures the consistency of their evaluation over time.
- F. The evaluating panel/board shall include, but not be limited to all of the following:
1. A majority of members who are deaf and possesses the knowledge and experience necessary to evaluate court interpreters for deaf persons;
  2. Certified interpreters who may themselves be court interpreters or intermediary court interpreters (as defined in Evid. Code, §754) and possess the knowledge and experience necessary to evaluate court interpreters for deaf persons; and
  3. A judge or member of the State Bar of California.
- G. The certifying organization shall hold testing at reasonable cost to the applicant interpreter and with sufficient frequency and diversity of location to ensure that there is reasonable opportunity and accessibility for individuals in all parts of the state to be tested and certified.
- H. The certifying process shall have and maintain:
1. Competence-based standards of performance;
  2. A clear process for determining the pass-fail standard for certification and cutoff scores on tests; and
  3. An established procedure for the regular and timely review and adjustment of these standards of performance, utilizing input from interpreters, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, court personnel, and research sources.
- I. The certifying organization shall maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the testing process, including test materials, scoring information, and other sensitive information. The certifying organization shall have a procedure to regularly update, rotate, reformulate, or alter test materials to guarantee that the confidentiality of test items, tapes, scripts, and other materials is protected and that the materials are new to those applicants who are being tested.
- J. Upon completion of testing, the certifying organization shall issue to qualified interpreters a certificate which clearly identifies the interpreter as certified to interpret in court by this organization and the period of time covered by the certification.
- K. The certifying organization shall furnish to the Judicial Council a list of those interpreters who are certified to interpret in court proceedings and shall keep this list up-to-date by immediately informing the Judicial Council of any additions or deletions to this list.
- L. If the certifying organization plans to include in this list those interpreters who were certified to interpret in court proceedings by the organization prior to the effective date of approval by the Judicial Council to certify court interpreters under these guidelines, the certifying organization shall have a clear and reasonable procedure to do so. This procedure must ensure that interpreters so included shall meet the competency and knowledge requirements of the certifying organization as approved under these Judicial Council guidelines.
- M. The certifying organization shall have an established and reasonable procedure for assuring the continued competency of certified court interpreters through periodic assessment or other means. Such a certification maintenance process must include efforts by the certifying organization to enhance continued competence of the individual. If continuing education is used as a means of ensuring

continued competency, the certifying organization may not require interpreters to enroll in its own education or training program.

- N. The certifying organization shall promptly report certification results to applicants.
- O. The certifying organization shall have and publicize the existence of a reasonable grievance and appeal process for certification applicants who question the certification or testing process, test results, or eligibility for testing.
- P. The certifying organization shall have and publicize the existence of a reasonable complaint process for the public to use in addressing discipline of those holding certificates, including revocation of certification for conduct that clearly indicates incompetence, unethical behavior, and physical or mental impairment affecting performance.
- Q. The certifying organization shall also furnish to the Judicial Council a list of community organizations and contacts which can serve as resources to the court in facilitating the legal process where certified sign language court interpreters are involved.

## **II. Certification Testing and Test Content**

- A. The certification process, including tests and testing procedure, shall be objective, fair, and free of test bias (including, but not limited to, bias as to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, culture, or class).
- B. The certification process, including tests and testing procedure, shall be directly based on the knowledge and skills needed to function as an interpreter in court proceedings.
- C. Tests and testing processes shall be standardized and nondiscriminatory and shall be shown to be both reliable and valid (particularly as relates to the certified court interpreter's subsequent ability to perform in court proceedings) under generally accepted procedures for establishing the validity and reliability of tests.
- D. The certifying organization shall clearly state, and publish, in a manner reasonably certain to provide adequate notice to applicants, the certification and testing criteria and the requirements used to certify court interpreters, including information about the competencies required, the level of competency required, and how these competencies are determined.
- E. The certifying process shall be comprehensive in testing for all aspects of the court interpreting process, including all of the following:
  - 1. Translation and transliteration competency, which includes:
    - a. American Sign Language competency;
    - b. English language competency; and
    - c. Competency in interpreting language and terminology common to court proceedings;
  - 2. The role, function, and understanding of techniques for working *with* a relay interpreter or other intermediaries or for working as a relay interpreter;
  - 3. Understanding of social, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the local, state, and national communities of deaf people;
  - 4. The role and function of court interpreters including court etiquette;
  - 5. The various court proceedings which commonly and frequently require use of an interpreter or interpreters; and
  - 6. A code of conduct and professional ethics.



- F. If, in addition to testing for the above, a certifying organization establishes education and training requirements which an interpreter must have prior to certification (such as a high school diploma or college degree), there must be a direct correlation between these requirements and an interpreter's ability to perform in court proceedings. A certifying organization may not require an interpreter to take its own education or training program as a prerequisite to testing or certification.

### **III. Application to the Judicial Council for Approval to Certify Court Interpreters and Maintenance of Standing**

- A. The certifying organization shall provide to the Judicial Council all evidence required to document compliance with these guidelines.
- B. The certifying organization shall advise the Judicial Council of any substantive changes in the structure and administration of the certification process, including any substantive changes in testing techniques or testing content. The certifying organization, agency, or institution shall provide any information about the certification process to the Judicial Council upon request.
- C. An approved certifying organization shall provide evidence to the Judicial Council of continued compliance with the guidelines at four-year<sup>1</sup> intervals after initial approval.
- D. An approved certifying organization shall provide evidence of continued compliance with these guidelines prior to the mandated four-year interval at the discretion of the Judicial Council if evidence exists of noncompliance with these guidelines.
- E. The Judicial Council may suspend or revoke its approval of a certifying organization or place conditions on continued approval if such action is deemed necessary to ensure the quality and/or integrity of court interpreting or this approval process.

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On December 15, 2009, the Judicial Council adopted the recommendation to revise guidelines III(C) and (D) of the *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons* to require the review of approved certifying organizations from every two years to every four years.

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**Attachment 2: SC:L and BEI Court Interpreter Certification Information**

BEI Court Interpreter Exam Information:

- Application Fee: \$50
- Court Interpreter Written Exam (prerequisite): \$100
- Court Interpreter Performance Test: \$185

The following table includes comparative information for the RID SC:L and the [BEI](#) court interpreter performance exams.

<b>Exam Information</b>	<b>RID Specialist Certificate: Legal (Performance Exam)</b>	<b>BEI Court Interpreter Exam (Performance Exam) <sup>10</sup></b>
<b>Stated Purpose</b>	Tested for the demonstrated specialized knowledge of legal settings and greater familiarity with language used in the legal system	To ensure that interpreters meet the minimum proficiency standards established by the BEI for successfully discharging the responsibilities of a state-certified interpreter
<b>Testing Format</b>	Performance, video-recorded with supplemental written materials	Performance, video-recorded
<b>Content Covered</b>	Exam included 4 vignettes: (1) Miranda Warning, (2) Courtroom Scene, (3) Interpreter Qualification, and (4) Jury Instructions	Six sections: (1) Consecutive (spoken English to/from ASL), (2) Simultaneous (spoken English to ASL), (3) Simultaneous (spoken English to ASL), (4) Simultaneous (ASL to spoken English), (5) Consecutive (spoken English to/from ASL), (6) Sight Translation (written English to ASL)
<b>Length</b>	75 minutes for warm-up, 75 minutes for the test itself; typically lasts 2 hours, not to exceed 3 hours total	Total: Approx. 68 min (includes time for introductions, warm-ups, and instructions)

<sup>10</sup> A “Study Guide for BEI Court Interpreter Performance Test Candidates” (2015) is available at <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/about-hhs/leadership/advisory-committees/bei/BEICourtStudyGuide.pdf>. At page 11, the guide notes that the BEI Court Interpreter Performance Test simulates actual interpreted proceedings. Candidates are asked to render the information in the same manner as if s/he was working as an interpreter. All materials must be interpreted so that the intent, tone, and the language level of the speaker, signer, or document is conveyed without distorting or omitting any of the meaning of the original message in the source language, which is essential for court interpreting.

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<b>Rating/Scoring</b>	<p>Candidate performance was rated according to descriptors for each behavioral scale used for each test section. Examples included Syntax, Nonmanual Markers, Phrasing, Neutrality, Integrity of Message, Variation in Interpretation, Affect, Fluency, Recovery /Repair, Register, Mannerisms, etc.</p>	<p>Interpreting proficiency is measured through scoring units, which are rated objectively according to a scoring dictionary that is updated as novel responses are encountered. Delivery, Adaptability, and Pronunciation/Fluency are judged holistically using a three-point scale, where 1 = does not meet expectations; 2 = meets expectations; and 3 = exceeds expectations</p>
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The following table shows Continuing Education Unit (CEU) requirements for the two examinations:

<b>SC:L CEU Requirements</b>	<b>BEI CIC CEU Requirements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 80 contact hours with a minimum of 60 hours in professional studies</li> <li>• 20 of the 60 hours in professional studies must be in legal interpreting topics</li> <li>• Complete every four years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain 60 hours of interpreting-related topics for generalist credential</li> <li>• 20 hours court-related topics; 20 hours ethics-related topics</li> <li>• Complete every five years</li> </ul>

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**Attachment 3: ASL Generalist Examinations Accepted by Some States**

ASL Generalist Examinations Accepted by Some States
RID Comprehensive Skills Certificate, or CSC
RID Certificate of Interpretation (CI) AND Certificate of Transliteration (CT)
RID Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) Certification
Master Comprehensive Skills Certificate (MCSC)
National Interpreter Certification (NIC) levels
NIC Advanced
NIC Master
National Association of the Deaf (NAD) III (Generalist)
NAD IV (Advanced)
NAD V (Master)

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**Attachment 4: Additional Information Obtained by Judicial Council Staff from Texas**

1. Do other states need to enter into any kind of legal agreement or other type of agreement regarding process with Texas to allow their candidates to test in Texas?

There is no need to enter into any kind of legal agreement.

To sit for the Texas BEI court performance test, the candidate must meet our established [eligibility requirements](#) for court certification.

An applicant must already be BEI certified at the Advanced or Master level or hold a RID certification (Comprehensive Skills Certificate, Certificate of Interpretation/Certificate of Transliteration, Reverse Skills Certificate, Certified Deaf Interpreter, Master Comprehensive Skills Certificate, National Interpreter Certification Advanced, or National Interpreter Certification Master).

In addition, the applicant must have passed the court interpreter written test before being eligible to sit for the signing/performance test.

If the candidate does not have RID or BEI certification (Advanced or Master level), there is the option for candidates to pursue BEI general certifications. The general certification process includes a written exam (Test of English Proficiency) then a performance test (Basic, Advanced, and Master). For out-of-state candidates seeking a Texas BEI general certification, we have a couple of options. A candidate can choose to apply and schedule their TEP written test first (traveling to a designated testing site within Texas), then upon passing, apply to take the performance test (requires travel to Austin, Texas). A second option is to join a waitlist for a special two-day, back-to-back testing session (TEP one day, performance test the next day). We try to offer these special testing sessions in Austin twice a year (often around March and August).

However, for taking the court performance test only (assuming prerequisites are met), one would need to contact BEI at [dhhs.bei@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:dhhs.bei@hhs.texas.gov) to begin the application process.

2. Can Texas waive its requirement that the Written Examination be taken in Texas if an interpreter has taken and passed the California Written Examination (which is the standard National Center for State Courts' Written Examination)?

Yes, NCSC has confirmed that the Texas written examination is the same NCSC written examination administered in California. A copy of the written examination test results will need to be sent by the candidate to the BEI office when scheduling the court performance test.

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**(Action Item)**

3. Would ASL interpreters who pass the Texas BEI certification be responsible for reporting their continuing education requirements to Texas?

Yes, the interpreter would need to comply with our CEU requirements to maintain their certification. Our policy manual covering eligibility, training requirements, renewal process, etc. can be found [here](#).

4. What if there was a complaint regarding the performance of an ASL court interpreter? Is there a complaint process in Texas, or would the state where the complaint occurred be responsible?

If an individual files a complaint against a Texas BEI certified court interpreter, the complaint would be sent to the Director of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Agency in Texas and the Director will then conduct factfinding and may bring it to the review of the BEI advisory board, as needed.

5. How often does Texas administer the ASL court interpretation examination each year?

There's no time set aside to administer only the court test; it's scheduled in queue in the order applications come in.

6. What is the usual timeframe from taking the test to receiving results?

Typically, it is a 90-day turnaround.

# New American Sign Language (ASL) Requirements

## Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

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March 30, 2023



# Objectives for Today

- Review need for a solution
- Summarize major research findings
- Review report recommendations
- Approve proposal to circulate for public comment



# Current Situation

- The Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) is the only credential recognized by the Judicial Council for ASL court interpreters
- The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) stopped testing for the SC:L effective January 1, 2016

# Need for a Solution

- ASL is the third most interpreted language in California courts
- Only 31 of 55 ASL court interpreters on the council's Master List of Interpreters are self-reported as active
- The courts need a cost-effective way to increase the number of qualified ASL court interpreters to serve the public

# National Center for State Courts (NCSC)

- Developed research and findings on requirements for ASL court interpreters
- Provided snapshot of national landscape
- Included the use of existing testing instruments, as well as non-testing options, such as training and portfolio requirements, that may be considered by the Judicial Council for use in California to qualify ASL court interpreters

# Presentation of NCSC Findings

- Findings were presented by NCSC to the CIAP Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee on
  - March 29, 2022
  - September 13, 2022
- Subcommittee posed several questions that were addressed in research

# Summary of Findings

- Many states continue to recognize the SC:L as a valid certification for ASL court interpreters
- Several states have also adopted other testing and non-testing options to recognize or classify other ASL interpreters for work in the courts in their states

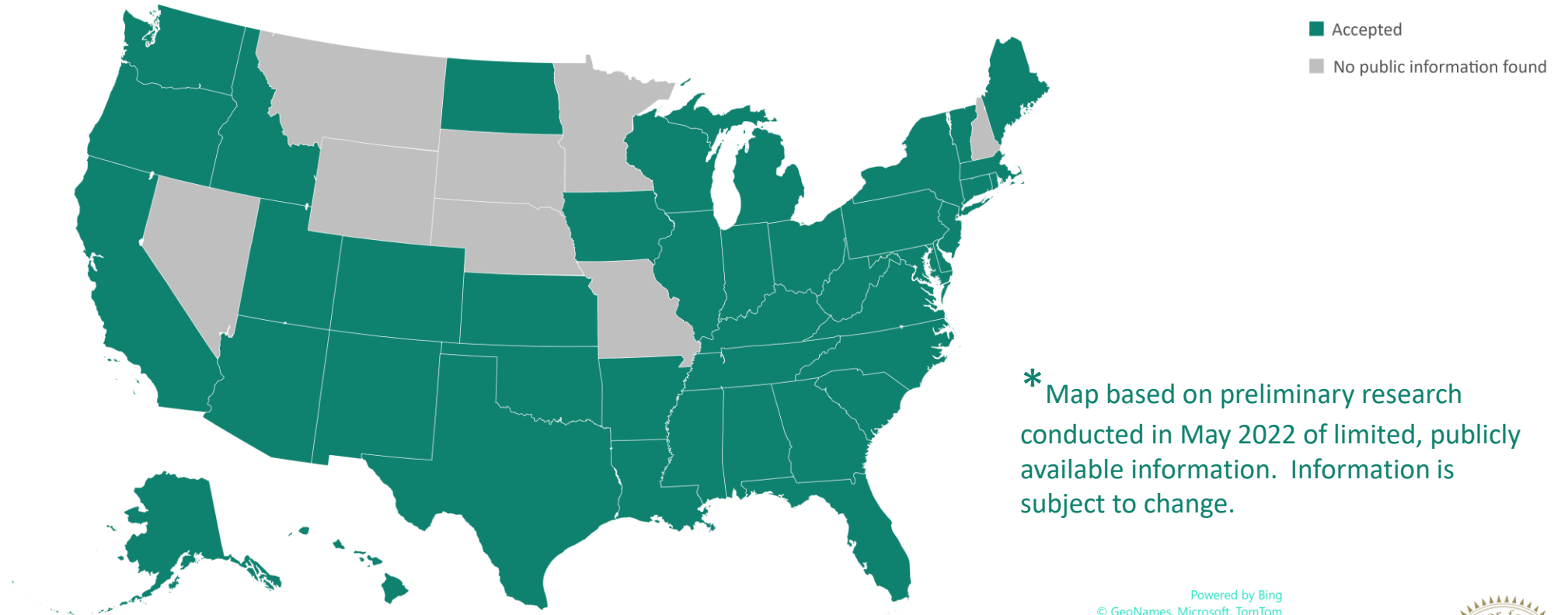
# ASL Court Interpreter Exams

- RID SC:L – national ASL court interpreter exam developed and maintained by RID until January 1, 2016 – **no longer offered**
- The Texas Board of Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Court Interpreter Certification Exam – Texas court interpreter ASL exam currently administered in Texas

# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



Recognition of RID SC:L for Credentialing



\* Map based on preliminary research conducted in May 2022 of limited, publicly available information. Information is subject to change.

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National Center for State Courts, September 2022



# Texas BEI Certification

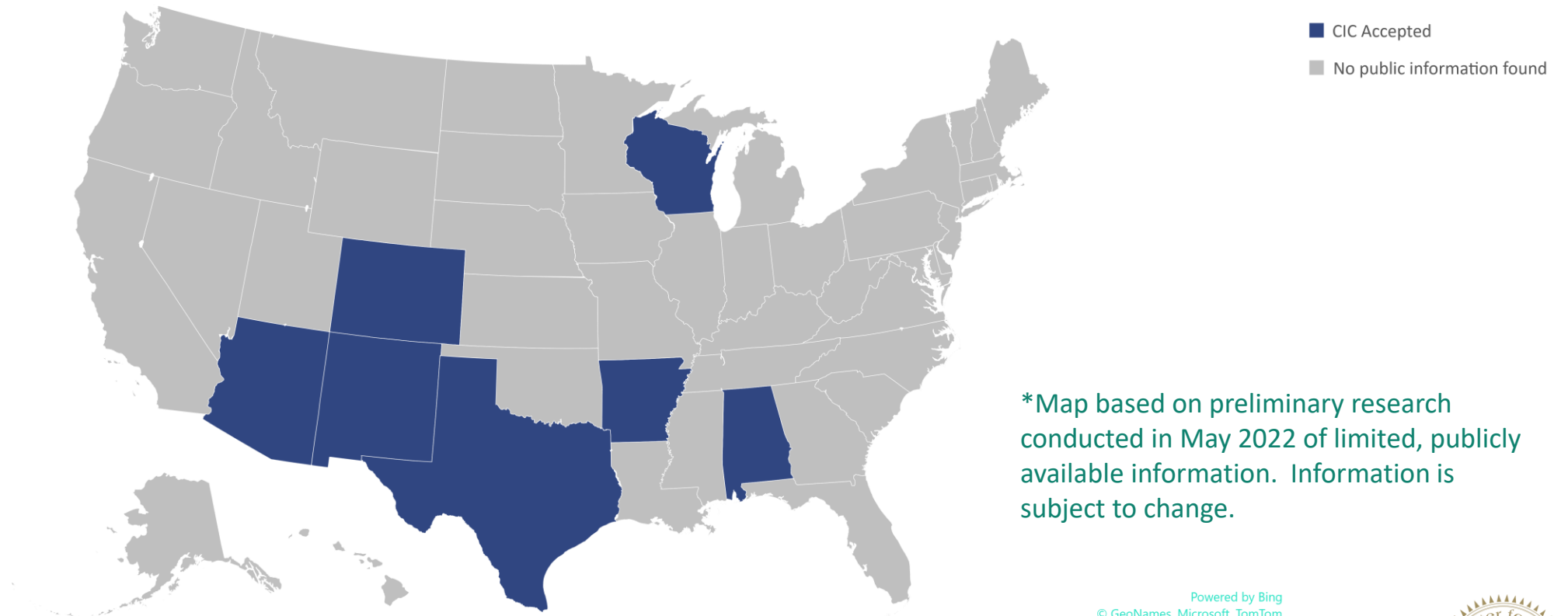
- Only available examination in the U.S. that tests for proficiency as an ASL court interpreter
- Candidates must sit for exam in Texas
- Several states recognize through reciprocity



# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



Recognition of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification Exam



\*Map based on preliminary research conducted in May 2022 of limited, publicly available information. Information is subject to change.

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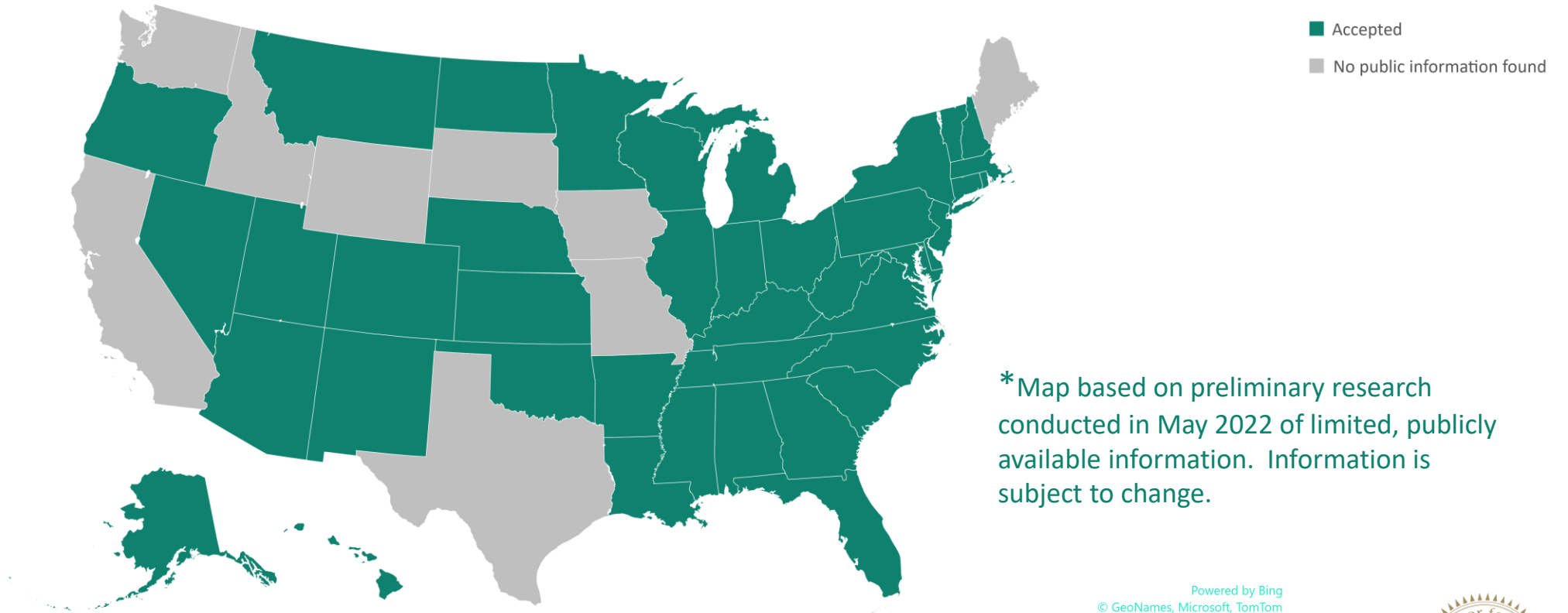
# Recognition of Generalist Credentials

- Several states also have training and performance requirements for lower-level classifications
- ASL Interpreters with generalist credentials receive legal training and complete portfolio requirements to receive a court-qualified status, enabling them to work in the courts

# ASL Generalist Examinations



Recognition of RID Generalist Certifications for Credentialing



\*Map based on preliminary research conducted in May 2022 of limited, publicly available information. Information is subject to change.

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*National Center for State Courts, August 2022*



# CA Evidence Code section 754

(f) For purposes of this section, “qualified interpreter” means an interpreter who has been certified as competent to interpret court proceedings by a testing organization, agency, or educational institution approved by the Judicial Council as **qualified to administer tests to court interpreters** for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



Exam Information	RID Specialist Certificate: Legal (Performance Exam)	BEI Court Interpreter Exam (Performance Exam)
<b>Stated Purpose</b>	Tested for the demonstrated specialized knowledge of legal settings and greater familiarity with language used in the legal system	Test ensures that interpreters meet the minimum proficiency standards established by the BEI for successfully discharging the responsibilities of a state-certified interpreter
<b>Testing Format</b>	Performance, video recorded	Performance, video recorded

# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



Exam Information	RID Specialist Certificate: Legal (Performance Exam)	BEI Court Interpreter Exam (Performance Exam)
<b>Content Covered</b>	Exam included 4 vignettes: (1) Miranda Warning, (2) Courtroom Scene, (3) Interpreter Qualification, and (4) Jury Instructions	Six sections: (1) Consecutive (spoken English to/from ASL), (2) Simultaneous (spoken English to ASL), (3) Simultaneous (spoken English to ASL), (4) Simultaneous (ASL to spoken English), (5) Consecutive (spoken English to/from ASL), (6) Sight Translation (written English to ASL)

# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



<b>Exam Information</b>	<b>RID Specialist Certificate: Legal (Performance Exam)</b>	<b>BEI Court Interpreter Exam (Performance Exam)</b>
<b>Length</b>	75 minutes for warm-up, approximately 75 minutes for the test itself	Total: approximately 68 minutes (includes time for introductions, warm-ups, and instructions)

# ASL Court Interpreter Exams



Exam Information	RID Specialist Certificate: Legal (Performance Exam)	BEI Court Interpreter Exam (Performance Exam)
<b>Rating/Scoring</b>	Candidate performance rated according to descriptors for each behavioral scale used for each test section. Examples include Syntax, Nonmanual Markers, Phrasing, Neutrality, Integrity of Message, Variation in Interpretation, Affect, Fluency, Recovery /Repair, Register, Mannerisms, etc.	Interpreting Proficiency is measured through scoring units, which are rated objectively according to a scoring dictionary. Delivery, Adaptability, and Pronunciation/Fluency are judged holistically using a three-point scale, where 1 = does not meet expectations; 2 = meets expectations; and 3 = exceeds expectations.



# BEI Court Interpreter Exam



## BEI Court Interpreter Exam Additional Information:

- Application Fee: \$50
- Court Interpreter Written Exam (pre-requisite): \$100
- Court Interpreter Performance Test: \$185

*National Center for State Courts, September  
2022*



# Continuing Education Requirements

## SC:L CEU Requirements

- 80 contact hours with a minimum of 60 hours in professional studies
- 20 of the 60 hours in professional studies must be in legal interpreting topics
- Complete every four years

## BEI CIC CEU Requirements

- Maintain 60 hours of interpreting-related topics for generalist credential
- 20 hours court-related topics; 20 hours ethics-related topics
- Complete every five years

*National Center for State Courts, September 2022*



# Texas BEI Certification

- Candidates must travel to Texas, or be a current holder of the certification
- Persons report CE credits to Texas
- Complaints go to Texas Director DHHS
- Recognition would not require any cost to the council or courts

# Potential Solutions for California

- Recognize Texas BEI Certification for ASL Court Interpreters through reciprocity
- Continue further development by the subcommittee to create a pathway in California for interpreters with a generalist ASL credential

# Recommendation 1

- Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize the Texas Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) as a recognized testing entity for ASL court interpreter certification for four years

## Recommendation 2

- Seek approval from the Judicial Council to recognize holders and passers of the Texas BEI Court Interpreter Certification who apply through reciprocity to be added to the Judicial Council Master List to expand California's pool of ASL court interpreters

## Recommendation 3

- Seek approval from the Judicial Council for CIAP to undertake further development towards recognition of persons with ASL generalist credentials to perform work in the courts, which may include California court-specific training requirements

# Recommendation 4

- Seek approval from the Judicial Council to sunset the 2009 *Guidelines for Approval of Certification Programs for Interpreters for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons* and
- Implement a process for approving certification programs that is more responsive to the current interpreter marketplace and testing and certification landscape



# Seek Public Comment on Proposal

- Enables all interested individuals and entities to provide their input in a uniform and equally accessible manner
- CIAP will include, and respond to, each public comment received in its written report to the council seeking approval of proposed changes to ASL requirements

# Next Steps

- Approve proposal for public comment
- Circulate for at least 30 days
- Following public comment, staff will prepare a draft council report for CIAP approval prior to submission to council



# 2022 Interpreting Testing

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Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

March 30, 2023

## 2022 Interpreting Testing Goals

- Increase the number of test seats
- Provide testing for more certified spoken languages




# Court Interpreter Examination Requirements

Spoken Certified Languages*	Registered Languages
✓ Written Examination in English	✓ Written Examination in English
✓ Bilingual Interpreting Examination (BIE; oral exam)	✓ Oral Proficiency Examination in English
<i>*Major interpreted languages, such as Spanish, Vietnamese, etc.</i>	✓ Oral Proficiency Examination in Target Language (if available)

# 2022 OPE & Written Examination

- Oral Proficiency Examination (OPE)
  - Jan. 1 through Nov. 1, 2022
- Written Examination
  - Jan 1 through Dec. 1, 2022



Examination*	Pass Rate – All Candidates	Pass Rate – Registered Languages Only
Oral Proficiency Examination	<b>42%</b> (47/111)	<b>80%</b> (16/20)
Written Examination	<b>39%</b> (203/516)	n/a

\*OPE and Written Examination reporting period – January 1 through December 1, 2022.

## 2022 Bilingual Interpreting Examination (BIE)

- 300 available seats
- 243 administered exams
- Scattered testing over 3 months
- 10 certified languages
- 5 California locations (2 Northern & 3 Southern)
- Observed COVID-19 health and safety requirements

## BIE Pass Rate for 2021 and 2022

Near passer trainings have proven successful to increase the passage rate for the BIE, which previously averaged less than 10 percent

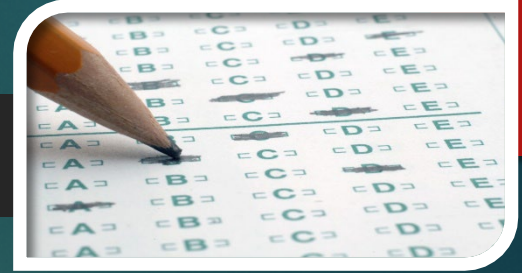
2021	2022
Total number of candidates: 190	Total number of candidates: 243
Pass rate: <b>14%</b> (27/190)	Pass rate: <b>14%</b> (34/243)
Total number of near passer training participants who took the BIE: 53	Total number of near passer training participants who took the BIE: 28
Passage rate: <b>25%</b> (13/53)	Passage rate: <b>21%</b> (6/28)



# 2023 Interpreting Testing Goals

- Resume testing once new contract is in place
- Administer the Written Examination and OPE year-round
- BIE
  - Provide up to 600 seats and exams in most spoken certified languages
  - Expand number of testing months and locations
  - Use data to identify areas for improvement, address testing challenges, and track candidates' pass/fail rates

# Questions and Contacts



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