



COURT INTERPRETERS ADVISORY PANEL

INTERPRETER LANGUAGE ACCESS SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING

November 20, 2024

12:15 p.m. - 1:15 p.m.

Virtual

Advisory Body Members Present: Ms. Anabel Z. Romero (ILAS Chair), Mr. Hector Gonzalez, Jr. (CIAP Vice-Chair), Ms. Angie Birchfield, Stephanie Cameron, Ms. Jennifer De La Cruz, Mr. Hany Farag, Mr. Bryan Kritzeck, Mr. José Navarrete

Advisory Body Members Absent: Ms. Shirley Luo, Hon. Michael P. Pulos

Others Present: Mr. Ray Mata, Mr. Russell McGregor, Mr. Douglas Denton, Ms. Jacquie Ring, Ms. Briana Stone, Ms. Danielle Reier

OPEN MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call

The chair called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. and took roll call.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS (ITEMS 1-1)

Item 1

Potential Recognition of Persons with American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Credentials to Perform Work in the Courts (Information Only)

The subcommittee received an informational presentation from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on their findings regarding the training, portfolio development, and other requirements states use to recognize individuals with ASL generalist credentials to work in the courts, and potential considerations for California.

Some members discussed concerns about potentially amending Evidence Code section 754 to allow generalists to work in the courts, including how it might impact ASL interpreters that work for non-court entities. While some expressed caution about moving too quickly without clear frameworks, others supported taking steps to help expand court user access to ASL interpreters.

ADJOURNMENT

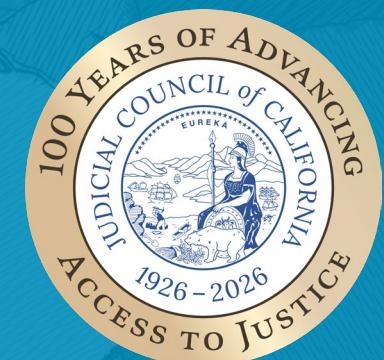
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Approved by the advisory body on enter date.

Revised Strategy for American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Interpreters

Russell McGregor, Senior Analyst
Language Access Implementation

February 3, 2026



Purpose

- Discuss revised strategy (Guidelines and Pilot Program)
- Why we shifted from legislative change
- Pilot scope, safeguards, and workforce development goals

Background

- Shortage of certified ASL court interpreters
- RID SC:L discontinued in 2016
- Original plan: amend Evidence Code §754
- Public comment raised major concerns

Why We Changed Course

- Public comment major themes:
 - Due process risks in ‘non-complex’ cases
 - Vagueness of ‘good cause’
 - Transparency and stakeholder inclusion
- Legislative change seen as too broad and risky
- New approach: Guidelines and Pilot Program

Revised Strategy Overview

- Develop Guidelines
 - Define when/where Generalists can be used
 - Mandatory qualifications and training
 - Safeguards for due process
- Launch Pilot Program in 3-5 courts
- Goal: expand access without lowering standards

Pilot Program Scope

| Generalists will NEVER be used for: | Allowable settings may include: |
|---|---|
| Trials (jury or court) | Self-help centers, clerk counters |
| Witness testimony or contested evidentiary hearings | Simple continuances, routine hearings |
| Criminal cases beyond minor traffic | Small claims, minor traffic |
| Any matter involving child custody, restraining orders (e.g., domestic violence, civil harassment), or contested family court hearings. | Jury orientation/selection Court-mandated programs, probation meetings Limited procedural emergencies |

Interpreter Qualifications

-  5+ years professional ASL interpreting experience
-  National certification (e.g., NIC, BEI, NAD)
-  Pass NCSC Court Interpreter Written Exam
-  40+ hours legal interpreting training
-  20+ hours supervised court practice
-  Judicial Council ethics training
-  Court observation and portfolio of legal work

Safeguards & Oversight

| Safeguards | Oversight |
|--|---|
| Documented due diligence before using Generalists | Centralized roster |
| Judicial on-the-record findings | Complaint process (ethical vs. linguistic issues) |
| Deaf party informed consent and Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) involvement when possible | Data collection and performance monitoring |
| Standardized ASL video explainers | Feedback loops with courts and Deaf community |

Workforce Development

Pilot supports pipeline to full certification

Long-term goal:
increase certified
ASL court
interpreter pool

Timeline and Next Steps

- Phase 1: draft Guidelines and pilot development (current)
- Phase 2: CIAP and Judicial Council approval of pilot
- Phase 3: pilot implementation
- Phase 4: evaluation and refinement
- Phase 5: approval of revised Guidelines
- Phase 6: full rollout (earliest 2028)

Closing

- Ethical, data-driven approach
- Balances access to justice with due process
- Builds sustainable interpreter workforce



Discussion/Questions



Strategy Document: American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist

This strategy document outlines the Judicial Council's (JC) revised strategy, focusing on developing comprehensive Guidelines and implementing a Pilot Program for ASL Generalist Interpreters, directly addressing the concerns raised by stakeholders regarding the proposed amendment to Evidence Code § 754.

Background and Justification for the Use of ASL Generalists

What is the current status of ASL interpretation in California courts, and what steps has the Judicial Council already taken?

California courts are experiencing a significant and persistent shortage of certified American Sign Language (ASL) court interpreters following the discontinuation of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) in 2016. Internal data indicates that between Fiscal Years 2020–21 and 2023–24, approximately one in five court appearances requiring an ASL interpreter did not utilize a California-certified ASL court interpreter. Unlike spoken languages, there is no provisional qualification process for ASL interpreters who do not hold court certification. In the absence of certified ASL court interpreters, courts may need to rely on ASL generalists or other non-certified ASL interpreters to ensure access to court proceedings. Unfortunately, developing, administering, maintaining, and staffing its own ASL court interpreter examination is prohibitively expensive for the Judicial Council.

To address this gap, the JC has:

1. **Revised ASL Guidelines:** Adopted revised ASL Interpreter Guidelines in 2025 to allow JC to recognize other agencies that certify court ASL interpreters.
2. **Recognized the only other certifying body for ASL court interpreters:** Officially recognized the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Court Interpreter Certification (CIC) in 2024 to allow for an expansion of the certified ASL court interpreter pool.
3. **Commissioned Expert Research:** Contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to conduct extensive research in this area. NCSC identified the development of ASL Generalist Interpreters for work in the courts as a leading strategy to increase the court ASL interpreter workforce.

Who specifically participated in the NCSC Generalist research to ensure all stakeholders were heard?

To ensure a robust, strategic, and ethical solution, the NCSC study incorporated input from a diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- **Advocacy & Nonprofit Organizations:** National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Deaf Equality, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Bar Association, and various California Deaf Service Agencies.
- **Workforce Experts and Credentialing Authorities:** Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Center for the Assessment of Sign Language Interpretation (CASLI), and state-level certification program managers.
- **ASL Interpreters:** Including Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), California certified ASL court interpreters (SC:L holders), and other legally certified professionals.
- **Judicial Bodies:** California Court Staff and Language Access Representatives, as well as Language Access Program Managers from other states.

Why is the Judicial Council shifting from amending Evidence Code § 754 to developing Guidelines and a Pilot Program?

The initial legislative proposal was withdrawn due to significant stakeholder concerns over the statutory vagueness of "good cause" and the potential for creating a "two-tiered system of justice."

Our revised strategy, **Guidelines** and a **Pilot Program**, directly addresses these concerns by:

- **Defining the Use Case:** Instead of a vague statutory term, we are developing clear Guidelines that strictly define *where* Generalists can be used and *when* (after rigorous due diligence).
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** The Pilot Program allows us to gather verifiable data on the Generalists' utilization, quality, and impact in a controlled environment before considering any permanent policy.
- **Ethical Protection:** This approach prioritizes the development of comprehensive ethical and due process safeguards before any Generalist is placed in a court setting.

This Pilot Program does not create a new certification, lower existing standards, or replace certified ASL court interpreters. Its purpose is to establish a structured, limited, and accountable framework for addressing access challenges while preserving existing certification requirements.

This revised approach is consistent with the Judicial Branch Strategic Plan, particularly the goals of advancing access, fairness, and diversity; improving the quality of justice and service to the public; and modernizing court operations through data-driven and accountable practices. By prioritizing structured safeguards, clear communication with court users, and pilot-based evaluation, the Judicial Council seeks to expand meaningful access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users while maintaining due process and public trust.

What is the long-term goal for Generalist Interpreters?

The program's core goal is Workforce Pipeline Development. The ultimate objective is to provide a structured path, including specialized training and monitored experience, to encourage and support Generalist interpreters to successfully pursue and achieve full court interpreter certification (BEI CIC), thereby strengthening the long-term supply of certified ASL interpreters for all court matters.

What will be the purpose of the Pilot Program?

The pilot will be a way to **develop, test, and refine guidelines** for using ASL generalists in California courts. The purpose and goals of the pilot will include the following.

- **Develop and test guidelines** for the appropriate use of ASL generalists in California courts while safeguarding due process and equal access.
- **Define clear eligibility, credentialing, and training standards** for ASL generalists working in court settings.
- **Establish guardrails for scope of practice**, including permitted case types, supervision, and teaming requirements.
- **Create a structured supervision and mentorship model** using Judicial Council–certified ASL court interpreters.
- **Evaluate quality, risk, and court impact** through data collection, performance feedback, and stakeholder input.
- **Identify best practices for deployment**, including in-person and remote interpreting where appropriate.
- **Support pathways to court certification** by aligning pilot requirements with Judicial Council-recognized credentials.
- **Develop findings to inform long-term policy decisions** regarding interpreter workforce development, rule and form changes, certification standards, and sustainable use of ASL interpreters in California courts.

Defining the ASL Generalist Interpreter

What specific generalist credentials will be considered for the Pilot Program?

An ASL Generalist for this program is a highly skilled interpreter who holds a national certification but does not hold legal specialist certification. The Judicial Council will review nationally recognized certifications that demonstrate professional ASL to English interpreting

competence. National research conducted by NCSC found that courts in other states rely on a range of generalist credentials for limited court assignments, which are shown below:

RID former and current credentials

1. National Interpreter Certification (NIC)
2. National Interpreter Certification Advanced (NIC A)
3. National Interpreter Certification Master (NIC M)
4. Educational Certificate: K to 12 (Ed K to 12)
5. Certificate of Interpretation (CI)
6. Certificate of Transliteration (CT)
7. Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC)
8. Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit (CLIP)
9. Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit Relay (CLIP R)
10. Provisional Specialist Certificate: Legal (Prov SC L)
11. Master Comprehensive Skills Certificate (MCSC)
12. Reverse Skills Certificate (RSC)
13. Interpretation Certificate (IC)
14. Transliteration Certificate (TC)

Board of Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) credentials

1. Board of Evaluation of Interpreters: Advanced (BEI A)
2. Board of Evaluation of Interpreters: Master (BEI M)
3. Board of Evaluation of Interpreters: Medical Interpreter
4. Board of Evaluation of Interpreters: IV (BEI IV)
5. Board of Evaluation of Interpreters: V (BEI V)

National Association of the Deaf (NAD) credentials

1. National Association of the Deaf: Master (NAD V)
2. National Association of the Deaf: Advanced (NAD IV)
3. National Association of the Deaf: General (NAD III)

National research shows that some generalist certifications appear more frequently than others in state court eligibility criteria and are more commonly relied upon by courts. For example, NIC, NIC Master, CI, and CT were identified in court interpreter eligibility lists in eleven states. NIC Advanced, CSC, and NAD V were recognized in ten states, while NAD IV appeared in nine states. Several BEI credentials, including BEI Advanced and BEI Master, are referenced by seven and eight states respectively. Other certifications identified through national research appear less frequently.

In developing the Guidelines, including use of findings from the pilot, the Judicial Council anticipates distinguishing between generalist certifications based on objective indicators of interpreting competence and professional rigor. Preliminary considerations may include whether a certification:

- Is issued or formally recognized and maintained in good standing by a national or state credentialing body
- Requires performance-based assessment of interpreting skill, rather than coursework alone
- Evaluates interpreting from spoken English into American Sign Language and from American Sign Language into spoken English
- Applies across multiple professional settings, rather than being limited to a single context
- Is commonly relied upon by courts nationally for limited court related assignments

Working from these preliminary criteria, certifications such as NIC, NIC Advanced, NIC Master, CI, CSC, CT, CLIP-R, BEI Advanced, BEI Master, BEI Level IV, BEI Level V, NAD IV, and NAD V appear to most consistently align with all five factors and may warrant closer consideration during development of the Guidelines.

As the Guidelines are developed, this criteria-based approach may also support distinguishing which generalist certifications are appropriate for a broader range of limited, non-complex court activities and which certifications, due to their scope or design, may be more limited in use or not appropriate for court assignments. Any such distinctions would be defined through the Guidelines and informed by additional stakeholder input, operational considerations, and pilot findings.

The Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit Relay (CLIP-R) is a notable example of a credential that aligns closely with the objectives of the ASL Generalist Pilot Program. Although no longer issued, CLIP-R remains a recognized RID credential when maintained in good standing. Holders were required to be Certified Deaf Interpreters or Reverse Skills Certificate holders and to complete substantial, documented legal interpreter training and mentoring. Because CLIP-R was specifically designed for legal settings, it may be particularly well-suited for a broad range of limited, non-complex court assignments identified for the Pilot Program when combined with appropriate experience, training, and court safeguards.

The Certificate of Transliteration (CT), while frequently referenced in national court eligibility

criteria, differs in scope in that it certifies proficiency in English based signed communication rather than full American Sign Language interpreting. As a result, its potential use would be limited to specific, non-complex contexts where English based signing is appropriate and consistent with the communication preferences of the Deaf or hard-of-hearing court user.

The inclusion of a certification in this list does not mean that all credentials will be treated as equivalent or that any certification alone is sufficient. The Guidelines will further define eligibility by considering the rigor, scope, and assessment standards of each credential, together with mandatory experience and training requirements, to determine which certifications demonstrate appropriate preparation for limited, non-complex court assignments during the ASL Generalist Pilot Program.

It is important to note that some certifications identified through national research are no longer issued but remain valid and in good standing with the originating certifying body. These legacy credentials often reflect a long history of professional interpreting experience and sustained competence. At the same time, currently issued certifications provide opportunities for new interpreters to demonstrate professional readiness and to participate in structured training and mentorship pathways. Together, these credentials support both the immediate needs of courts and the long-term development of a qualified ASL interpreter workforce, consistent with the Pilot Program's workforce pipeline goals.

What are the mandatory qualification criteria and specialized training requirements for an ASL Generalist?

The Guidelines will require Generalists to demonstrate specific competence and complete a rigorous, multi-faceted vetting process.

To qualify for the Generalist Roster, based on recommendations from NCSC's ASL Generalist report, JC may require interpreters to complete or demonstrate:

- A minimum of five years of professional ASL interpreting experience.
- Passage of the NCSC Court Interpreter Written Exam.
- Completion of a minimum of 40 hours of RID- or Judicial Council-approved legal interpreting training.
- Completion of a minimum of 20 hours of court interpretation practice under the direct supervision/mentorship of a certified ASL interpreter.
- Completion of the Judicial Council specialized training on Ethics and Professional Conduct for Court Interpreters.
- Completion of a required portfolio of legal-related interpreting work or designated training

modules demonstrating exposure to court settings, legal terminology, court procedure, and professional standards relevant to limited court assignments.

- Completion of a minimum number of structured court observation hours, as defined by the Guidelines, to ensure familiarity with courtroom procedures, roles, and communication dynamics.
- And any other requirements deemed by their certifying agency, so they are in good standing.

The Pilot Program and Operational Safeguards

Where will ASL Generalist Interpreters be allowed to work during the Pilot Program?

The Pilot Program is intended to assess whether limited use of ASL Generalists can expand access and reduce delays. It also examines whether this approach supports interpreter workforce development while maintaining due process and communication quality. The pilot is designed to operate within clearly defined limits, with robust safeguards, oversight, and evaluation mechanisms.

The Pilot Program will operate for a defined period in 3 to 5 volunteer courts and will be narrowly restricted to low-level, non-complex, non-evidentiary court actions, which will be outlined in draft Guidelines for the use of ASL Generalists in court. These draft Guidelines will serve as a starting point and will be refined and finalized based on findings and feedback from the pilot.

ASL Generalist Interpreters Will NEVER Be Used For:

- Trials (jury or court).
- Witness testimony or contested evidentiary hearings.
- Criminal proceedings (beyond minor traffic matters).
- Any matter involving child custody, restraining orders (e.g., domestic violence, civil harassment), or contested family court hearings.

Allowable settings may include:

- Self-Help Center and Clerk Counter interactions.
- Simple Continuances and routine case management conferences.
- Routine hearings.
- Court mandated programs.
- Probation meetings.
- Small Claims.

- Minor Traffic matters.
- Limited Procedural Emergencies.
- Jury Selection.

How will the Judicial Council define “non-complex” court actions for purposes of the Pilot Program?

For purposes of the Pilot Program, “non-complex” court actions are proceedings or interactions where the communication demands are predictable, limited in scope, and do not require interpretation of contested evidence, complex legal argument, or nuanced legal analysis.

Non-complex court actions typically share the following characteristics:

- Communication is primarily procedural, informational, or administrative
- Language used is largely standardized and repetitive
- Proceedings are short in duration and narrowly focused
- No sworn testimony is taken
- No legal arguments are presented
- No adjudication of disputed facts occurs
- The interaction does not result in the waiver or adjudication of constitutional or statutory rights

This definition focuses on communication complexity and risk, rather than the mere presence of a judicial officer or courtroom setting.

Non-Complex Court Proceedings for the Pilot Program

The case types identified for the Pilot Program were selected based on national research, operational court practices, and the level of linguistic and legal complexity involved. Each category reflects settings where communication is structured, predictable, and limited in scope.

Simple Continuances and Routine Case Management Conferences in Civil Matters

These proceedings are limited to scheduling matters and procedural updates. Communication is highly repetitive and predictable, focusing on setting or continuing dates rather than resolving substantive legal issues.

Routine Hearings

Routine hearings include brief, non-contested appearances such as status checks, compliance updates, or proof-of-completion hearings. These hearings do not involve testimony, legal argument, or judicial findings on disputed facts.

Small Claims Cases

Small claims proceedings are designed for self-represented litigants and rely on simplified procedures and plain language. They focus on factual narratives rather than complex legal analysis and are typically short in duration with limited evidentiary scope.

Minor Traffic Matters

For purposes of the Pilot Program, “minor traffic matters” refer to non-criminal traffic proceedings that are brief, procedural in nature, and do not involve contested evidence, testimony, or potential incarceration. Examples may include:

- Infraction arraignments
- Traffic compliance or proof-of-correction hearings
- Traffic calendar appearances involving scheduling, payment options, or disposition of infraction
- Non-contested traffic matters resolved by admission or dismissal

Generalist ASL interpreters will not be used for criminal traffic proceedings or matters involving heightened legal or evidentiary complexity, including but not limited to:

- DUI or DUI-related hearings
- Reckless driving charged as a misdemeanor
- Probation violation hearings related to traffic offenses
- Any traffic matter involving testimony, contested evidence, or potential jail exposure

Limited Procedural Emergencies

These emergencies are included only when immediate communication is required, and delays are not feasible. They are strictly limited to procedural or informational matters and exclude evidentiary hearings, contested determinations, or any high-stakes decisions.

Other Settings for the Pilot Program

Self-Help Center and Clerk Counter Interactions

These interactions are informational and procedural in nature. They typically involve explaining forms, deadlines, filing requirements, and court processes. They do not involve adjudication, legal advocacy, or evidentiary determinations.

Court Mandated Programs

Court mandated programs typically involve orientation sessions, educational workshops, intake meetings, or compliance briefings required by the court as part of case processing. These interactions are instructional and standardized in nature, often follow a set curriculum or script, and focus on explaining program requirements, schedules, expectations, or available resources. Communication in these settings is generally one directional or informational, does not involve

the presentation of evidence, legal argument, or judicial decision making, and frequently occurs outside the courtroom.

Because these programs are not adversarial and do not involve adjudication of rights or contested issues, they may be appropriate for limited use of ASL Generalist interpreters under the Pilot Program when a certified court interpreter is unavailable.

ASL Generalist interpreters are not expected to be routinely used for court-connected Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) proceedings, including court-ordered mediation, settlement conferences, or judicial arbitration. As part of the pilot, courts may assess whether certain ADR proceedings are suitable for ASL Generalist interpreter assignments.

Probation Meetings

Routine probation meetings are administrative in nature and focus on instructions, reporting requirements, and compliance information. These meetings are distinct from probation violation or modification hearings, which are excluded from the Pilot Program.

Jury Selection (including jury orientation)

Jury selection, including jury orientation, is a structured process designed to determine juror eligibility and impartiality. Communication during jury orientation and voir dire generally relies on plain language and questions focused on everyday experiences, availability, and fairness, with limited use of technical legal terminology. Jury proceedings are managed by a judge and follow standardized formats. For purposes of the Pilot Program, jury selection would be considered only for limited use and subject to the court's determination that the communication demands remain appropriate for a Generalist ASL interpreter. If the court determines that the proceeding requires higher levels of legal or linguistic complexity, a certified ASL court interpreter would be required.

How will the Guidelines ensure Generalists are only used when a California certified ASL court interpreter is "unavailable"?

The Guidelines will establish a clear, standardized due diligence process, modeled on existing court practices for spoken-language provisional interpreter appointments. Courts will be required to make documented, good-faith efforts to secure a certified ASL court interpreter before a Generalist may be considered.

Documented Efforts

Courts must demonstrate reasonable efforts to contact certified ASL court interpreters from the Master List, taking into account the nature, urgency, and scheduling requirements of the proceeding.

Defined Unavailability

For purposes of the Pilot Program, a certified ASL court interpreter may be considered unavailable when documented good-faith efforts to secure services have failed due to factors such as lack of response, lack of availability within the required timeframe, or inability to secure services on reasonable terms consistent with prevailing court practices. Generalists may not be used as a routine scheduling or budget alternative. The use of a Generalist is intended only as an option after genuine, documented efforts to obtain a certified court interpreter have been exhausted.

This due diligence requirement does not apply to non-courtroom informational or service interactions, such as self-help center or clerk counter assistance, where a certified court interpreter is not otherwise required.

How will courts manage situations where a proceeding becomes more complex than anticipated?

The Guidelines will recognize that court proceedings can evolve in real time. Courts will make an initial determination based on the expected scope and communication demands of the proceeding. If, during the course of the proceeding, the communication becomes legally, procedurally, or linguistically complex beyond what is appropriate for a Generalist ASL interpreter, the judicial officer may reclassify the proceeding and require the use of a certified ASL court interpreter. This determination will be made on the record, and the matter may be continued if necessary to ensure appropriate access and due process. Judicial Council may develop tools and guidance for judicial officers to identify when a proceeding moves from simple to complex.

How will the program protect the rights of Deaf or hard-of-hearing court users?

The court may provide the deaf or hard of hearing court user with additional support when utilizing a Generalist ASL Interpreter in a court proceeding to ensure they are informed of their rights. Court users will be informed of the interpreter's status and may request a certified court interpreter whenever feasible. Exceptions may apply in emergency circumstances and will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the judicial officer. In addition, Judicial Finding will be mandatory for in-court proceedings, requiring an on-the-record finding by the judicial officer that the Deaf or hard-of-hearing party has been informed and agrees to proceed with the use of a Generalist.

Courts may do some or all of the below.

- **Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI):** Utilize a CDI, if available and/or at the request of the Deaf

or hard of hearing individual, to support clear communication and ensure the Deaf party understands the ASL Generalist interpreter's role and qualifications.

- **Provide Standardized Materials:** The Judicial Council may develop standardized educational documentation and videos to clearly explain the Generalist's limited role and the Deaf party's right to request a certified court interpreter.

What accountability system will be in place for ethical and performance concerns?

The system is designed to provide transparent, centralized oversight that leverages both legal and linguistic expertise. The Guidelines will establish a formal complaint process that clearly differentiates between types of issues:

| Complaint Type | Proposed Action | Rationale |
|--|--|--|
| In-Court Actions/Behavior (e.g., ethical violations, inappropriate demeanor, breaches of court protocol) | The Judicial Council/Language Access Services Program will be responsible for investigation and disciplinary action, including removal from the Generalist roster. | This ensures the court maintains authority over the interpreter's conduct while on court assignment. |
| Linguistic Quality/Signing Ability | The complaint will be forwarded to the interpreter's originating credentialing body (RID, BEI, NAD) for their respective ethical and competence review process. | The certifying body is the expert in evaluating fundamental language/interpreting competence. |

What mechanisms will be used to monitor the quality of the Generalist program?

The Judicial Council will maintain a centralized roster and implement standardized data

collection across all pilot courts to monitor the effectiveness, quality, and consistency of the ASL Generalist Pilot Program. Oversight mechanisms may include:

- **Feedback Loops:** Collecting and reviewing feedback from judicial officers, court staff, and, most critically, Deaf court users who receive services from ASL Generalists. This feedback may be used to identify trends, training needs, and areas for improvement.
- **Complaint Tracking and Review:** Establishing a centralized process to receive, log, and track complaints related to Generalist assignments, including ethical concerns, procedural issues, and communication quality, to support consistent review across pilot courts.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Reviewing assignment outcomes, continuances, reclassification decisions, and other operational indicators to assess whether Generalists are being appropriately matched to case types and whether additional training, supervision, or removal from the roster is warranted.
- **Linguistic Consultation (as feasible):** As resources permit, the Judicial Council may consult with Certified Deaf Interpreters and certified ASL court interpreters to inform the review of linguistic or performance related concerns. This consultation may be used to support quality assurance and training refinement rather than formal discipline.
- **Data Monitoring:** Reviewing assignment data, case types, frequency of use, and trends across pilot courts to assess compliance with the Guidelines and inform program evaluation.

Program Roadmap

What is the overall plan and timeline for full implementation?

The strategy moves forward in a deliberate, phased approach to ensure that the new system is built on data, ethics, and stakeholder trust.

| Phase | Action | Goal / Outcome |
|--|--|--|
| Phase 1: Guidelines and Pilot Development (Current) | Develop the comprehensive Guidelines (qualifications, due diligence, allowable use, accountability) and pilot scope. | Draft Guidelines and pilot recommendation presented to the CIAP Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee for review, input and approval. |
| Phase 2: CIAP and | Bring the draft Guidelines and pilot | CIAP and Judicial Council approve |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Judicial Council Approval | recommendations to the full Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) and then the Judicial Council for discussion and approval. | conducting a pilot based on the draft Guidelines. |
| Phase 3: Pilot Implementation (2026-2027) | Launch a controlled Pilot Program in 3-5 volunteer courts. Begin creating the official list/roster of Generalists who have met the proposed requirements. | Collection of real-world data and feedback to inform future rules. |
| Phase 4: Evaluation and Refinement | Review pilot data. Refine the Guidelines as needed based on feedback from courts, the Deaf community, and Generalist interpreters. Determine any necessary rule or form changes. | Revised, data-driven Guidelines for potential statewide use. As appropriate, revised rules and forms. |
| Phase 5: CIAP and Judicial Council Approval of Revised Guidelines | Present pilot findings and revised Guidelines to CIAP and Judicial Council for final approval before statewide rollout. | Approval of refined Guidelines and any necessary rule or form changes. |
| Phase 6: Full Rollout (Earliest 2028) | Subject to successful evaluation, move to full rollout of the program under the Judicial Council-approved Guidelines to all California courts. | A sustainable, ethical, and qualified language access solution for the Deaf community. |

Conclusion and Path Forward

The Judicial Council's shift to a Guidelines-based, phased Pilot Program for ASL Generalist Interpreters represents a committed, ethical approach to addressing California's critical court interpreter shortage. Our primary objective is not to lower standards, but to actively build the workforce pipeline, ensuring a structured pathway for qualified, experienced generalist interpreters to gain the legal specialization necessary for court work.

This entire process, including the specific certifications and allowable settings outlined in the

Guidelines, remains fluid and subject to continuous review and refinement by the CIAP Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee and CIAP. This ongoing evaluation ensures that due process for Deaf and hard-of-hearing Californians remains paramount. By proceeding with a data-driven, controlled pilot, the Judicial Council aims to uphold the integrity of the judicial system while expanding language access and maintaining the highest standards of justice for all.

Contact

For questions regarding this strategy document, please contact:

Russell McGregor, Senior Analyst

Language Access Implementation Unit | Leadership Support Services

Judicial Council of California

916-643-6988 | russell.mcgregor@jud.ca.gov | <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov>