



Judicial Council of California

**COURT INTERPRETERS ADVISORY PANEL
MINUTES OF OPEN MEETING WITH CLOSED SESSION**

October 15, 2025

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

Virtual

Members Present: Hon. Maurice Sanchez. (Chair), Ms. Anabel Romero (Vice-Chair), Mr. Hany Farag, Mr. Bryan Kritzeck, Ms. Mary Ma, Ms. Luisa Mc-Ewan, Mr. José Navarrete, Ms. Anabel Romero, Ms. Bonnie Faye Gibson-Brydon, Hon. Tamara Hall, Ms. Jennifer De La Cruz

Members Absent: Ms. Shirley Luo, Ms. Stephanie Cameron, Hon. Michael P. Pulos, Ms. Angie Birchfield

Others Present: Mr. Ray Mata, Ms. Angela De Leon, Mr. Douglas Denton, Ms. Jacquie Ring

OPEN MEETING

Call to Order and Roll Call

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

Approval of Minutes

The public provided written comments by the deadline, and they were shared with the members of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) the morning of the meeting.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS (ITEMS 1-1)

Item 1

AB 1032 Workforce Study (Action Required)

Mr. Douglas Denton, Principal Manager, Language Access Services Program, gave a presentation on the California Court Interpreter Workforce Study report required by AB 1032 (2023).

The members had no questions concerning the presentation.

Action: The voting members of CIAP unanimously voted to approve the Workforce Study report to go on to the Judicial Council for review and approval.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further open meeting business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION (CAL. RULES OF COURT, RULE 10.75(D)(8))

Item 1

Skills Assessment (Action Required)

Ms. Jacquie Ring, Language Access Consultant, NCSC gave a presentation to CIAP on a proposed process for assessing interpreters' skills when a complaint is filed regarding their interpreting ability.

Some members expressed concerns about the use of outside parties to evaluate court-certified interpreter employees and suggested that such assessments should be conducted internally. However, these concerns were alleviated upon learning that the skills assessment was developed with input from certified court interpreter employees.

Action: The voting members of CIAP unanimously approved incorporating the skills assessment process into the next revision of the California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures.

Adjourned closed session at 1:15 p.m.

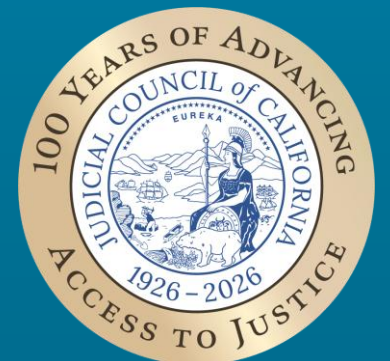
Approved by the advisory body on enter date.

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

Ray Mata, Analyst
Court Interpreters Program

May 13, 2026



Purpose of Credential Review Procedures

The Credential Review Procedures:

- Provide a process to review allegations of interpreter misconduct
- Ensure interpreters meet professional standards
- Protect the integrity of language access in the courts
- Safeguard due process for credentialed interpreters

These procedures are adopted pursuant to **Government Code section 68562(d)**

Existing Procedures

- Complaints regarding interpreter misconduct may be submitted to the Court Interpreters Program (CIP)
- CIP reviews and investigates allegations with Judicial Council Human Resources and Legal Services
- Cases involving potential sanctions may be referred to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH)
- Sanctions may include suspension, probation, or revocation of credentials

The procedures ensure compliance with Rule 2.890 of the California Rules of Court.

Identified Gap

The existing framework lacked a structured method to evaluate interpreter competence when performance concerns were raised

Challenges included:

- Difficulty objectively evaluating complaints about interpreting accuracy
- Limited tools to determine whether performance issues existed
- No intermediate corrective step before taking cases to OAH for formal disciplinary action

CIAP PSE Subcommittee Work

In 2021, the CIAP PSE Subcommittee began exploring options to address this gap

The goal was to develop a process that is:

- Fair
- Reliable
- Legally defensible
- Focused on improving interpreter performance

Collaboration with NCSC

Between 2022 and 2025, NCSC assisted with:

- Development of diagnostic tools
- Observation and evaluation instruments
- Interpreter performance assessment methods
- Resources to strengthen interpreter knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs)

Key Updates in the Revised Procedures

The revised Credential Review Procedures introduce three key improvements:

- Skills assessment process
- Disciplinary letter as an intermediate resolution option
- Clarifies investigation and resolution pathways

Skills Assessment Process

Key features:

- Conducted by neutral third-party evaluators
- Evaluates interpreting performance in relevant modes
- Identifies areas for improvement
- Used as part of the investigative process



The assessment serves primarily as a diagnostic tool to evaluate interpreter performance

Disciplinary Letter Option

A disciplinary letter summarizes problem and corrective action taken, and may require interpreters to:

- Complete ethics training
- Participate in targeted skill development
- Undergo a skills assessment
- Retake examinations if necessary

Credential Review Process: Before vs. After

 Current Process	 Revised Process
Complaint	Complaint
Review	Review
Investigation	Investigation/skills assessment (if needed)
OAH Hearing	Disciplinary letter / corrective action (if needed)
Sanctions	Additional investigation (if needed) → OAH → sanctions, up to revocation

Summary

The revised Credential Review Procedures:

- Strengthen the framework for reviewing interpreter complaints
- Introduce objective tools to evaluate interpreter competence
- Provide intermediate corrective actions when appropriate
- Maintain due process protections for interpreters

Next Steps

- CIAP review and approval to circulate
- Invitation to Comment (ITC)
- Review of public Comments
- Return to CIAP for final approval
- Submission to the Judicial Council



Judicial Council of California
455 Golden Gate Avenue • San Francisco, California 94102-3688
courts.ca.gov/policy-administration/invitations-comment

INVITATION TO COMMENT

ITC Prefix-XXX

Court Interpreters: Revised Credential Review Procedures

DRAFT – Invitation to Comment Details

Proposed Rules, Forms, Standards, or Statutes
None

Proposed by
Hon. Maurice Sanchez, Chair
Ms. Anabel Z. Romero, Vice-Chair
Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

Action Requested
Review and Submit Comments by
June 30, 2026, to invitations@jud.ca.gov

Proposed Effective Date
January 1, 2026

Contact
Ray Mata, 916-643-6955
ray.mata@jud.ca.gov

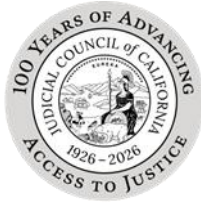
(This proposal has not been approved by the Judicial Council and is not intended to represent the views of the council, its Rules Committee, or its Legislation Committee. It is circulated for comment purposes only.)

Executive Summary and Origin

The Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) proposes amendments to the *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures* to incorporate a standardized skills assessment process for addressing skills-based complaints and to authorize the issuance of disciplinary letters, when warranted, as an intermediate corrective action.

Discussion/Questions





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Executive Summary and Origin

The Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) proposes amendments to the *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures* to incorporate a standardized skills assessment process for addressing skills-based complaints and to authorize the issuance of disciplinary letters, when warranted, as an intermediate corrective action.

The proposal integrates a structured, third-party skills assessment into the credential review process when a complaint is received and a court interpreter's competence or performance is in question. The proposed updates would also authorize the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Program (CIP) to issue a disciplinary letter to an interpreter, when appropriate, as an intermediate step before further action is taken. These updates are intended to improve consistency, objectivity, and proportionality in the evaluation and resolution of complaints.

The proposal stems from ongoing Judicial Council efforts to strengthen the credential review procedures and enhance accountability, including CIAP's work and collaboration with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to develop a validated skills assessment process.

Background

The existing Credential Review Procedures establish a process for reviewing complaints including allegations of misconduct against California certified and registered spoken language court interpreters.¹ While the procedures allow for investigation and formal discipline through a proceeding with the Office of Administrative Hearings, they historically lacked:

- A standardized method for objectively evaluating interpreter competence; and
- A clearly defined intermediate corrective option short of formal disciplinary action.

As reflected in the proposed revisions, skills-based complaints, particularly those involving alleged gross incompetence, require a more structured and reliable evaluation tool. Additionally, not all violations warrant formal proceedings, creating a need for proportionate corrective measures as an intermediary step.

The Proposal

From 2022 to 2025, the council contracted with the NCSC to support the development and refinement of diagnostic tools (e.g., intake instruments, observation tools, and checklists) and related resources to assist in assessing interpreting knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) when a complaint is filed regarding an interpreter's performance.

The skills assessment will be conducted virtually and will include prepared audio recordings, scripts, and interpretation scenarios that mirror typical court interactions. The skills assessment will be recorded. It shall be evaluated by a minimum of two evaluators using an approved scoring rubric. The virtual assessment will be used to identify court interpretation skills and areas for improvement. The skills assessment process is not intended to be a pass/fail assessment and will not be used as the final determination of an interpreter's credential.

This proposal would update and revise the Credential Review Procedures to incorporate the standardized skills assessment process. The amendments would also authorize the use of disciplinary letters issued by CIP when warranted as intermediate corrective action. The amendments integrate a structured method for evaluating interpreter competence when

¹ The Judicial Council's Credential Review Procedures apply only to certified or registered spoken-language court interpreters listed on its Master List of Certified and Registered Court Interpreters. Individuals on this list have either passed the required California examinations or qualified through reciprocity and have completed the Judicial Council's application process to become certified or registered court interpreters in California. By contrast, American Sign Language (ASL) court interpreters on the Master List are credentialed through either the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf or the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters prior to applying to California, and those organizations are responsible for receiving complaints about individuals who hold their credentials.

performance-related complaints are received and provide additional tools to resolve matters in a more proportionate and efficient manner.

Judicial Council staff worked in collaboration with CIAP and its Professional Standards and Ethics (PSE) Subcommittee to develop these revisions. On May 13, 2026 (TBD), CIAP approved the proposal for circulation for public comment. The updated procedures retain the overall structure of the existing framework but introduce new provisions to address gaps related to competence evaluation and disciplinary responses.

Key proposed changes include:

- Establish a formal skills assessment process, including a new section outlining procedures for referral, administration, and use of assessment results;
- Integrate skills assessment into the credential review process, allowing its use during both the initial assessment and investigation phases when interpreter competence is at issue;
- Authorize the issuance of disciplinary letters as an intermediate corrective action when warranted, including required remedial measures such as training, skills assessment participation, or retaking credentialing examinations;
- Expand resolution options by allowing matters to be resolved through corrective actions without the need to initiate formal disciplinary proceedings;
- Improve consistency and objectivity in evaluating interpreter performance by incorporating a standardized, third-party assessment tool;
- Enhance transparency by allowing certain disciplinary outcomes, including the subject of disciplinary letters, to be reflected on the interpreter's public Master List record.

Alternatives Considered

No alternatives were considered. The *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures* document has not been updated since its adoption by the council in 2020 and does not reflect current practices or recent developments, such as the creation of a standardized skills assessment process to address skills-based complaints. CIAP included this update as a project on its annual agenda, and the proposed amendments are necessary to formally incorporate the skills assessment and disciplinary letter processes into the credential review procedures.

Fiscal and Operational Impacts

The proposal is expected to have minimal fiscal or operational impact on courts, since most of the updates expand upon the existing council process for evaluating complaints. Some additional training for court staff may be required, especially for handling and processing interpreter complaints when court input is necessary under the revised procedures. These impacts are anticipated to be limited and are likely to be offset by improved training, greater efficiency, more consistent outcomes, and a reduced need for lengthy investigations or formal proceedings. Initially, skills assessments will be available for Spanish only; however, as the program

develops, additional trained evaluators for other languages will be added as needed. Funding for the skills assessment program will come from the Judicial Council Language Access Services program budget and will be supported by neutral third-party evaluators selected by the council. Strengthening the credential review process will enhance public protection, preserve the integrity of the court interpreter profession, and support timely identification and resolution of interpreter performance issues.

Request for Specific Comments

In addition to comments on the proposal as a whole, the advisory committee is interested in comments on the following:

- Does the proposal appropriately address the stated purpose?
- Are the procedures regarding participation in skills assessment clear and appropriate?
- Does the disciplinary letter provide an effective and proportionate intermediate corrective option?
- Are the proposed public disclosure provisions for the subject of disciplinary letters appropriate?

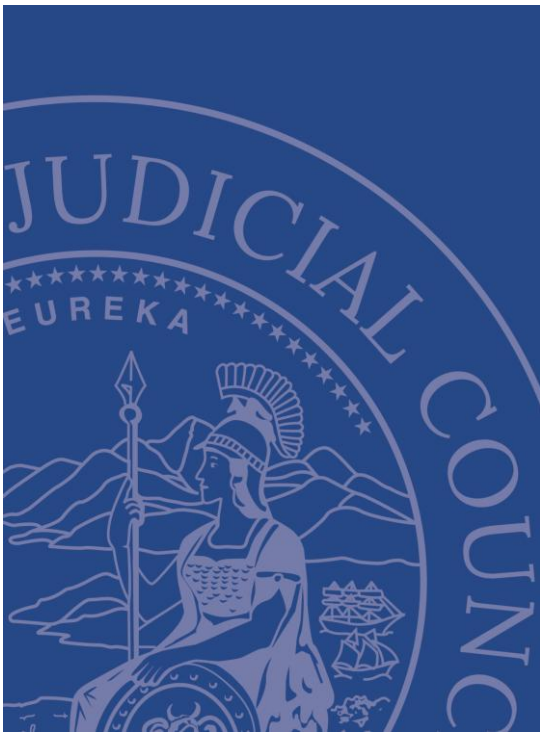
In addition to the above questions, the advisory committee seeks comments from courts on the following cost and implementation matters:

- Would the proposal provide cost savings? If so, please quantify.
- What would the implementation requirements be for courts—for example, training staff (please identify position and expected hours of training), revising processes and procedures (please describe), changing docket codes in case management systems, or modifying case management systems?
- Would one to two months from Judicial Council approval of this proposal until its effective date provide sufficient time for implementation?
- How well would this proposal work in courts of different sizes?

Attachments and Links

1. Cal. Rules of Court, rule 2.890,
https://courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index/two/rule2_890
2. Cal. Rules of Court, rule 2.891,
https://courts.ca.gov/cms/rules/index/two/rule2_891
3. California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures (January 2020),
https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/sites/default/files/partners/default/2023-12/CIP_CRProcedures.pdf
4. [Judicial Council Master List of Certified and Registered Court Interpreters](#)

Effective January 1, 2027



California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

DRAFT



Judicial Council of California
Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

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California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

A. Purpose

Court interpreters play a critical role in facilitating accurate communications between the court and limited-English-proficient users. In performing that crucial function, court interpreters are governed by the professional conduct provisions of rule 2.890 of the California Rules of Court.¹ The Judicial Council of California adopts these credential review procedures² in accordance with Government Code section 68562(d), which provides: “The Judicial Council shall adopt standards and requirements for interpreter proficiency, continuing education, certification renewal, and discipline. The Judicial Council shall adopt standards of professional conduct for court interpreters.”

These procedures reinforce the professional standards for certified and registered court interpreters by:

1. Establishing a process for the Judicial Council under its authority to issue court interpreter credentials, and to review allegations of professional misconduct or malfeasance against certified and registered court interpreters;
2. Defining the due process protections and procedures governing the credential review process;
3. Seeing that California certified and registered court interpreters meet and maintain minimum professional standards of practice; and
4. Safeguarding the quality and integrity of credentialed court interpreters in California.

The procedures set forth recognize the distinction between the obligations of the Judicial Council as the credentialing body to ensure interpreters abide by the codes of professional conduct as set forth in rule 2.890, *Professional conduct for interpreters*, and those of the employer to ensure interpreter employees follow workplace policies. Trial courts retain the authority to enforce their local personnel policies, collective bargaining agreements, and contractual agreements with independent contract interpreters.

The credential review procedures do not preclude a superior court—consistent with the court’s applicable memoranda of understanding, personnel policies, and/or local rules—from receiving

¹ *Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters*, published by the Judicial Council, is based on the principles and requirements set forth in rule 2.890 of the California Rules of Court. The manual is available at <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/system/files/general/professional-standards-and-ethics-california-court-interpreters.pdf>.

² The *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures* were first adopted by the Judicial Council in September 2018 for an effective date of January 1, 2019. This revision, effective January 1, 2027, was prepared under the direction of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel and was approved by the council in Month/Year.

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and investigating complaints, conducting investigations, and taking the necessary disciplinary or corrective action against interpreter employees or contractors who violate a court's rules, policies, and procedures, but rather supplement local court actions.

The credential review procedures are separate from discipline arising from an interpreter's work performance. However, discipline or corrective actions at the court on an employee interpreter may be considered in the credential review process, or, in regard to actions taken on an independent interpreter's contractual agreement with the court as a result of an allegation of misconduct or ongoing performance issues.

B. Jurisdiction

Every certified or registered spoken-language interpreter on the Master List of Certified and Registered Court Interpreters (Judicial Council Master List) is subject to these procedures.³ Jurisdiction over an interpreter to enforce and act under these procedures exists regardless of whether the interpreter resides in California.

C. Grounds for Sanctions on Interpreter Credentials

As the entity responsible for issuing credentials to court interpreters in California, the Judicial Council of California's Court Interpreters Program (CIP) may impose sanctions on any California court certified or registered interpreter, up to and including revocation of an interpreter's credential. The grounds for sanctions may include:

1. Violation of rule 2.890 of the California Rules of Court;
2. Gross incompetence, including, but not limited to, a lack of the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the duties of a court interpreter⁴;
3. Deliberate misrepresentation of a certified court or registered interpreter credential, including failure to notify relevant parties of a suspension or revocation of a court interpreter credential;
4. Knowing and reckless disclosure of confidential or privileged information obtained while serving in an official capacity;

³ American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters may be credentialed by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) or the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI). Information on filing a complaint against a BEI-certified interpreter is available at: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/handbooks/board-evaluation-interpreters/chapter-2-complaints-against-a-bei-certificate-holder>. Information on filing a complaint against an RID-certified interpreter is available at: <https://rid.org/programs/ethics/eps-complaints/>.

⁴ See <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/system/files/2025-10/KSAs.pdf>

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5. Fraud, dishonesty, or corruption related to the functions and duties of a court interpreter;
6. Conviction of a felony or misdemeanor;
7. Violation of California or federal law, including discrimination and harassment laws;
8. False or deceptive advertising after receipt of notification to discontinue; and
9. Violation of duties imposed by these procedures.

D. Statute of Limitations

Requests for a credential review of alleged misconduct as identified in section C, Grounds for Sanctions on Interpreter Credential, submitted to CIP by an individual or entity **other than a court** more than 90 days after the alleged misconduct occurs will be rejected as untimely, and no further action will be taken.

If a trial court receives a complaint that may require a credential review, the following time limits apply:

1. Requests for credential review submitted by anyone other than a trial court, or that regard an independent contractor, must be submitted to CIP within 90 days of the alleged misconduct.
2. As the employing entity, a court should locally investigate any allegation of employee misconduct. If the results of the investigation may warrant a sanction on the interpreter's credential, the court must submit a request for credential review within 30 days of the completion of the investigation; or
 - a. If a court requires assistance in conducting an investigation and it is determined a credential review is required, the court must submit the request to CIP within 90 days of the date of the alleged misconduct; or
 - b. If the 90-day period has elapsed, the court must submit the request for credential review to CIP within 30 days of becoming aware of the alleged misconduct, or after addressing an ongoing pattern of conduct that may require a sanction on a court interpreter's credential.

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

E. Submitting a Request for Credential Review

Any person or entity, including a court, may submit a request for a credential review to CIP regarding a spoken-language interpreter who is a California certified or registered court interpreter and enrolled on the Judicial Council Master List. The request for credential review:

1. Must be submitted using the California Court Interpreter Complaint Form, available on the “Court Interpreters Complaints” webpage of the California Courts Language Access Services website: <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/about/contact-us/court-interpreters-complaints>.
2. Must be signed and dated under penalty of perjury. During the credential review process, the confidentiality of a complainant’s identity will be preserved to the extent permitted by law.
3. The request for credential review must include a detailed description of the alleged misconduct including, if known or available, the date, time, location, name of interpreter, the interpreter’s badge number, the case file number of the proceeding interpreted, the names and contact information of any potential witnesses, and any documents or evidence that support the allegations.
4. The request for credential review, including the complaint form and any supporting documentation must be submitted to CIP, or to the local court where the allegation occurred. The request for credential review may be submitted in person, mailed, or sent electronically as follows :

In person or by mail:
Judicial Council of California
Court Interpreters Program
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688

By e-mail to: credreview@jud.ca.gov.

F. Assessment of a Request for Credential Review

Within 30 days of receipt of the request for a credential review, CIP staff will assess the request for credential review and determine whether it is complete, meets jurisdictional requirements, and provides sufficient factual allegations that, if true, would constitute grounds for sanctions up to and including revocation of an interpreter’s credential.

As part of this assessment, CIP staff will determine whether the alleged conduct may constitute a violation of the California Rules of Court, rule 2.890. Allegations involving gross incompetence under rule 2.890 may result in referral to a skills assessment process to evaluate the interpreter’s

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

ability to perform the duties of a court interpreter. Allegations involving other violations of rule 2.890 may result in the issuance of a disciplinary letter from CIP outlining the violation and identifying corrective actions that the interpreter must complete to remain in good standing.

1. The complainant will be notified within 45 days of the receipt of the request for credential review informing the complainant that the request has been received and is being reviewed; or
2. The complainant may be asked to provide additional information for staff to assess the request for credential review. Supplemental information must be submitted within 30 days, or as directed by CIP staff.
3. CIP staff will notify the complainant of the action to be taken regarding the request for credential review, and:
 - a. If the request for credential review meets the jurisdictional requirements, written notice will be provided to the interpreter who is the subject of the request for credential review. The notice will contain a summary of the allegation(s), the date the allegation(s) took place, and the case file number of the case interpreted, if available or applicable. The notice must be sent within 45 days of the receipt of the request for credential review by CIP staff; or
 - b. Assessment of the request for credential review may be deferred if the allegations are related to pending civil or criminal litigation. CIP staff will notify the complainant and the subject interpreter of the deferral, the reasons for the deferral, and its anticipated duration, if known.
4. If the allegations in the request for credential review do not meet jurisdictional requirements that warrant sanctions on an interpreter's credential, the complainant will be notified within 45 days of the receipt of the request for credential review.
5. All requests for credential review and investigations are confidential, except when a final determination is made to impose the sanctions as provided in section L, Notification of Sanction on a Credential.
6. The final determination, including the grounds for the sanction(s) may be made accessible to the public consistent with the rules governing public disclosure and California Rules of Court, rule 10.500.

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G. Investigation of Request for Credential Review and Issuance of Charging Document

1. The investigation may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Interviewing the complainant, interpreter, witnesses, and other relevant persons. If the interpreter chooses not to participate or respond to questions, the investigation may continue without the interpreter's participation.
 - b. Reviewing records, documents, case files, and other materials.
 - c. Requesting information and materials from the interpreter and other relevant persons. The interpreter must respond to all inquiries within 30 days of receipt of the request for information or materials unless CIP staff grants an extension upon a showing of good cause. If the interpreter chooses not to respond to the request for information or materials, the investigation may continue without the interpreter's participation.
 - d. Consulting with a subject matter expert on the duties and requirements to serve as a court interpreter.
 - e. When allegations question the interpreter's skill and competence, CIP may request the interpreter to submit to a skills assessment with the interpreter through neutral third-party evaluators selected by the Judicial Council. See Section H below.
2. At the conclusion of the investigation, if grounds for one or more sanctions exist, a charging document is prepared by CIP staff or its legal counsel that provides the evidentiary basis for the conclusions supporting identified sanctions on an interpreter's credential. The charging document will be concurrently: (1) served by CIP staff or its legal counsel on the interpreter; and (2) filed with the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), which will thereafter have jurisdiction over the administrative process of pursuing sanctions against an interpreter's credential. CIP staff may in its discretion provide advance notice to the interpreter that a charging document will be filed.
3. Once a charging document is filed and served, the procedures set forth in the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), Government Code section 11500 et seq., will apply and are incorporated herein. The procedures of the APA will apply in pursuing sanctions against an interpreter's credential unless the language in these procedures provides differently, in which case the language in these procedures will control.
4. The interpreter may request a hearing to contest the charges after engaging in good faith dispute resolution efforts as set out below under subdivision (5). To request a hearing, the interpreter must serve a Notice of Defense on the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Program office, or its legal counsel, within 30 days of service of the charging document. Upon

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

being served a Notice of Defense, the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Program office or its legal counsel will schedule a hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings. Failure to timely serve a Notice of Defense by the deadline will result in the interpreter's default in challenging the proposed sanctions pursuant to Government Code section 11520.

5. Prior to filing a Notice of Defense and requesting a hearing, the interpreter and CIP staff or CIP's legal counsel must engage in informal good faith dispute resolution efforts (i.e., a phone conference to discuss potential resolution; formal mediation before a third party is not required). If they are unable to resolve the charges, the case will proceed to hearing.

H. Skills Assessment

Skills assessment serves as an investigative tool to identify specific performance issues and areas needing improvement. If the skills assessment reflects substantive deficiency, it may be the basis for additional sanctions as outlined in Section L. The assessment results will be shared with the interpreter and considered alongside other evidence gathered during the investigation. More information on the skills assessment process is included in Attachment A.

The skills assessment process may include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Referral of the interpreter to complete a standardized third-party skills assessment evaluation process, developed by the Judicial Council and National Center for State Courts in collaboration with court interpreters and subject matter experts.
2. Notice to the interpreter that participation in the skills assessment process is required as part of the investigation when skill or competence is at issue.
3. Administration of the assessment by qualified and neutral third-party evaluators selected by the Judicial Council with subject matter expertise in court interpreter performance standards.
4. Evaluation of performance in relevant modes of interpreting (e.g., consecutive, simultaneous, sight translation), as applicable to the allegations.
5. Review of the assessment results by CIP and Judicial Council staff and, when appropriate, consultation with subject matter experts to interpret the findings.
6. Consideration of the assessment results as part of the totality of evidence in determining whether probable cause exists to issue a charging document.
7. If the interpreter fails to participate in the skills assessment process as directed, the investigation may proceed based on the available evidence; failure to participate in skills assessment may be grounds for suspension until a decision regarding revocation is determined. The stated justification behind the interpreter's unwillingness or inability to participate in the skills assessment process will be taken into account when determining a sanction.

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I. Resolution without Issuance of a Charging Document

With the approval of CIP staff, a request for credential review may be resolved before the issuance of a charging document.

1. A request for credential review may be resolved by:
 - a. Voluntary withdrawal of the request for credential review by the complainant before the issuance of the charging document;
 - b. Voluntary surrender of the interpreting credential by the interpreter and removal of the interpreter from the Judicial Council Master List; or
 - c. A settlement agreement that is signed by the interpreter and the Judicial Council's Administrative Director or his or her designee. Approval of a settlement by the Administrative Director or his or her designee constitutes a final decision and is not subject to further review.
 - d. Issuance of a disciplinary letter⁵ by CIP to the interpreter with specific actions that the interpreter must undertake to remain in good standing. The possible actions include, but are not limited to: completing ethics training, undergoing a skills assessment, completing recommended courses to enhance interpreting skills, and/or retaking the credentialing examination(s) to demonstrate competence.
2. Voluntary surrender of the interpreting credential requires the interpreter to provide CIP with written notice of the interpreter's voluntary surrender of the interpreting credential. Upon submission of the written notice to CIP, any credential review and/or administrative hearing process to impose sanctions or revocation on a credential, commenced hereunder will terminate. Upon surrender of the interpreter's credential, the interpreter will be removed from the Judicial Council Master List and will no longer be eligible to interpret in the California courts and be a part of the Court Interpreter's Program. The request for credential review and the sanctions arising from the proceedings may be reviewed in the event the interpreter seeks to reinstate his or her credential.
3. Sanctions taken on a court interpreter's credential may be posted on the CIP webpage consistent with the rules regarding public disclosure.
4. The subject and terms of disciplinary letters issued by CIP to the interpreter will be posted to the interpreter's public entry in the Judicial Council Master List.

⁵ Possible subjects of a disciplinary letter issued against a court interpreter could include misinterpretation and inaccuracies, lack of proficiency, breach of confidentiality, bias and partiality, conflict of interest, inappropriate behavior, tardiness and absenteeism, failure to prepare, violation of code of ethics, and failure to follow court procedures.

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

5. At the discretion of CIP, any of the resolutions provided for above may be considered and accepted after the filing of a charging document.

J. Right to Representation

An interpreter may be represented by legal counsel under these procedures, at the interpreter's expense.

K. Proceedings before the Office of Administrative Hearings and Judicial Council Advisory Panel Review

Hearings will be conducted in the OAH before an administrative law judge and will proceed under the procedures and requirements set forth in the APA.⁶

After a hearing before an administrative law judge, he or she shall prepare a proposed decision and order pursuant to Government Code section 11517(c). Thereafter, the proposed decision and order of the administrative law judge will be reviewed by a three-member panel consisting of current members of the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) pursuant to Government Code section 11517(c)(2), and the three-member panel may take any action as provided for in that section.⁷

L. Sanction⁸ Regarding a Credential

1. The type of sanction on an interpreter's credential must include consideration of aggravating and mitigating circumstances, including but not limited to:
 - a. The intent of the interpreter;
 - b. The gravity and impact of the harm to the complainant, the court, litigants, third parties, or judicial processes; and
 - c. The interpreter's history of prior discipline, including any pattern of improper conduct.

⁶ Administrative Procedure Act, at https://oal.ca.gov/publications/administrative_procedure_act/, and Gov. Code, § 11500 et seq., at https://california.public.law/codes/ca_gov't_code_section_11500.

⁷ One member of the three-member panel must be a certified or registered court interpreter member of the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Advisory Panel.

⁸ Separate from the *California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures*, California certified court and registered interpreters can be suspended or have their certification revoked for failure to comply with annual compliance requirements as outlined in the Compliance Requirements for Certified Court and Registered Interpreters, at <https://languageaccess.courts.ca.gov/system/files/guidelines/cip-compliance-requirements.pdf>.

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2. Sanctions on an interpreter's credential may include but are not limited to one or more of the following:
 - a. Revocation of a certified or registered status credential that is permanent or temporary;
 - b. Suspension of certified or registered status for a specified period of time after which the interpreter must make a written request to the Court Interpreter Program for reinstatement of his or her credential;
 - c. Probation for a fixed period of two years or less during which time the interpreter must meet the probationary terms as defined by the final decision and order to maintain credential status;
 - d. A requirement that specific education courses be taken to maintain credential status;
 - e. A public or private reprimand, which may include one of the other sanctions;
 - f. A requirement that the interpreter undergo a skills assessment, which may result in additional sanctions, including suspension of the interpreter's credential and/or the initiation of proceedings for revocation if warranted. Failure to participate in the skills assessment may be considered in any subsequent determination regarding disciplinary action or sanctions;
 - g. If an interpreter does not demonstrate improvement following a subsequent skills assessment and completion of recommended training, the CIP may require the interpreter to retake the credentialing examination(s). In matters referred to the OAH, the OAH may impose the same requirement in its final decision and order; and
 - h. A disciplinary letter that will be issued to the interpreter by CIP, and the subject and terms of this letter will be posted to the interpreter's public entry in the Judicial Council Master List.

M. Notification of Sanction on a Credential

1. CIP staff or its legal representative must notify the complainant, the interpreter, and all relevant courts within 30 days of a final decision and order being issued that specifies a sanction against the interpreter's credential. A final decision and order consist of either the three-member panel's adoption of an administrative law judge's proposed decision pursuant to Government Code section 11517(c)(2)(A)–(D), or issuance of a new decision of the three-

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

member panel pursuant to the procedure described in Government Code section 11517(c)(2)(E).

2. CIP may post information about an interpreter's credential status on the "Court Interpreters Program" webpage consistent with the rules governing public disclosure.
3. If disciplinary letters are issued by CIP or sanctions are issued by OAH after a hearing, staff will add this information to the interpreter's public record on the Judicial Council Master List.

N. Appeals

The interpreter may appeal the final decision and order as authorized by Government Code section 11523 of the APA.

O. Reinstatement

An interpreter whose California court interpreter credential has been suspended or temporarily revoked may apply in writing to CIP for reinstatement within the time established in the decision and order that imposed the sanction. CIP will have sole discretion in determining whether the conditions for reinstatement have been satisfied.

P. Confidentiality

All requests for review, evidence collected, and investigations must be confidential, except when a final decision and order to impose a sanction on an interpreter's credential are reached. In those limited circumstances, the final decision and order, the grounds for the sanction(s) imposed, and the facts cited to support the final decision and order on credential-related sanction(s), up to and including revocation of an interpreter's credential, must be accessible to the public.

A final decision and order exist in accordance with section M, Notification of Sanction on a Credential.

Publicly accessible information may be posted on the Judicial Council's "Court Interpreters Program" webpage or may be made available through a public records request to the Judicial Council under Government Code section 68106.2 and rule 10.500 of the California Rules of Court.

Attachment A: Skills Assessment Process and Mechanism

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

Attachment A: Skills Assessment Process and Mechanism

In 2021, the Professional Standards and Ethics Subcommittee of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) explored the feasibility and best available methods for:

- 1) Development of a legally defensible diagnostic process to assess an interpreter's ability to interpret if a complaint alleging gross incompetence or serious/repeated inaccuracy is submitted against the interpreter and the complaint is deemed to be supported by substantial evidence.
- 2) Identification of existing and possible development of options and resources that courts can utilize to strengthen an interpreter's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs).⁹

The subcommittee determined that the assessment process should be fair, valid, and reliable, and that it will be based on the KSAs generally expected of court interpreters.

The council anticipates that a well-defined process and mechanism for skills assessment will be a valuable tool for evaluation of an interpreter's current KSAs, primarily serving to pinpoint areas for improvement and identify additional training or resources needed for skill improvement. The evaluation process will be used with an intent to positively impact an interpreter's performance and not to challenge an interpreter's credential unless it becomes necessary to do so. The overall goal of the skills assessment process is to benefit court interpreters by utilizing a valid, reliable, and fair assessment tool that accurately reflects the KSAs being used on the job.

In 2022–25, the council contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to support the development or revision of diagnostic tools (intake instruments, observation tools, checklists, etc.) and supportive resources to assist the council with assessing interpreting knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA).

The mechanism and process outlined below includes the recommended process developed by NCSC to initiate and conduct skills assessments.¹⁰ The mechanism is not static and remains subject to continuous review and improvement

After the Court Interpreters Program (CIP) has received a complaint and determined that it validly raises allegations and concerns regarding a credentialed interpreter's ability to interpret, the staff

⁹ See <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/KSAs.pdf>

¹⁰ These recommendations do not cover assessment of potential physical, hearing or visual impairment issues, which are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA requires reasonable accommodations as they relate to three aspects of employment: 1) ensuring equal opportunity in the application process; 2) enabling a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job; and 3) making it possible for an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment.

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

will relay the complaint and any supporting information to an outside, neutral vendor to begin the process of an assessment.

1. In order to obtain additional information regarding allegations or concerns pertaining to an interpreter's interpreting ability, CIP staff may request completion of a standardized questionnaire, developed by NCSC, with court staff and the interpreter who is the subject of the complaint. These questionnaires are designed to gather additional context regarding allegations or concerns pertaining to an interpreter's interpreting ability, in order to assist with the assessment. The questionnaire is not the sole basis for a determination as to whether an interpreter requires a skills assessment.
2. Based on the nature of the complaint and information gathered during CIP's fact-finding process, CIP may: either refer the interpreter to additional training resources and/or initiate a live, proctored skills assessment process developed and administered by neutral third-party evaluators selected by the Judicial Council. A skills assessment may be initiated either as a result of one or more substantiated complaints regarding an interpreter's poor performance or lack of proficiency in the credentialed language. For minor skills-based complaints, CIP may elect to require the interpreter to participate in training resources to achieve needed improvements, rather than recommending a skills assessment. CIP retains discretion in making its determinations.
3. The skills assessment will be conducted virtually and will include prepared audio recordings, scripts, and interpretation scenarios that mirror typical court interactions. The skills assessment will be recorded. It shall be evaluated by a minimum of two evaluators using an approved scoring rubric. The virtual assessment will be used to identify court interpretation skills and areas for improvement. The skills assessment process is *not* intended to be a pass/fail assessment and will not be used as the final determination of an interpreter's credential.
4. The two (or more) evaluators conducting the evaluation shall possess the highest level of court interpreter credentials and/or linguist credentials available and shall have been trained on how to conduct a virtual assessment evaluation using the standardized rating process developed by NCSC.¹¹
5. Once a skills assessment evaluation is completed, its results will be first shared with CIP. At a later date that is identified by CIP, the results will also be shared with the court interpreter and the interpreter's employer court (if the interpreter is court-employed), and the court where the incident(s) that led to the submission of the complaint took place (if not the interpreter's employer court). A follow-up appointment will be scheduled between

¹¹ Evaluators must be native speakers of the non-English language and should hold the highest level of applied linguistic credentials available, including court interpreter certification in designated languages.

California Court Interpreter Credential Review Procedures

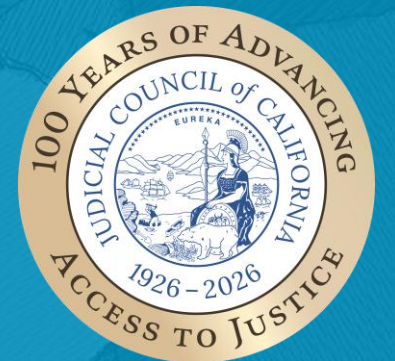
the outside vendor, CIP staff, and the interpreter to review the results of the assessment and provide guidance for the interpreter. If appropriate, the employer court (if any) and CIP will work with the interpreter to identify court interpreter skills-building resources and materials to assist the interpreter with any areas requiring improvement.

6. If appropriate, the evaluator, employer court, and/or CIP may recommend that the interpreter be reevaluated with the skills assessment process at a future date as needed.
7. Depending on the skills assessment results, CIP may also require the interpreter to re-take the Bilingual Interpreting Examination (BIE), Written Examination, and/or Oral Proficiency Examination (OPE) in English and the target language. This recommendation would only be made in the unusual circumstances where (1) an assessment indicates that the interpreter appears to lack sufficient proficiency in English and/or their credentialed language; (2) if after an amount of time deemed appropriate, a reevaluation indicates that the interpreter still does not appear to have made the recommended minimum skills improvements necessary to perform the duties of an interpreter; and/or (3) additional skills-based complaint(s) continue to be received by the employer court and/or CIP regarding the interpreter.
8. As a final step, the CIP may request that an interpreter forfeit their credential or, if necessary, initiate a credential review hearing to potentially revoke the credential if any of the following occur: (1) the interpreter's deficiencies in skills and abilities are egregious and not correctable; (2) the interpreter is required to retake the credentialing examination(s) and fails to pass them within twelve (12) months, or within another time period specified by CIP; or (3) the interpreter refuses to retake the required examination(s).
9. For languages of lesser diffusion for which there is no OPE available in the credentialed language, CIP may still administer the assessment, as well as require a re-test with the English OPE to determine sufficient proficiency in English. If the results from these processes indicate a deficiency in interpreting skills and abilities and/or a lack of proficiency in English, CIP may consider requesting a credential review hearing for the interpreter, or CIP may continue to direct the interpreter to training and resources to help support needed improvements.
10. The Judicial Council will make every effort to identify evaluators in the interpreter's language for assessment. However, there may be languages of lesser diffusion in which evaluators with the requisite credentials to assist with the assessment are not available.

Draft Guidelines and Pilot Program Proposal

Russell McGregor, Senior Analyst
Language Access Implementation

May 13, 2026



Purpose

Present	Present updated ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines and Pilot Program
Summarize	Summarize revisions following ILAS feedback and stakeholder input
Review	Review pilot scope, safeguards, and workforce development goals
Request	Request CIAP approval to advance the proposal to the Judicial Council for consideration in October 2026

Background

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

Revised Strategy Overview

- Develop structured ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines
- Define when and where generalists may be used
- Establish qualification, training, and oversight requirements
- Implement controlled Pilot Program in volunteer courts
- Collect data to evaluate safeguards, outcomes, and operational practices
- Support long-term ASL court interpreter workforce development

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), juvenile proceedings, or contested family court hearings	Jury orientation
	Court-mandated programs, probation meetings
	Limited procedural emergencies

Interpreter Qualifications

 5+ years professional ASL interpreting experience post certification

 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 live ethics training, ASL interpreter training modules

 Court observation and portfolio of legal work

Safeguards



Good-faith efforts to secure certified interpreters



Judicial determination of appropriateness



On-the-record findings



Proceedings paused if complexity increases



Oversight, complaint tracking, and data monitoring

Workforce Development

Pilot supports
pipeline to full
certification

Long-term goal:
increase certified
ASL court
interpreter pool

Timeline and Next Steps

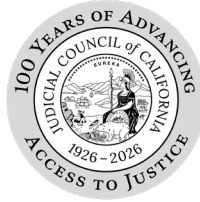
- Phase 1: Program Development and Approval (current)
 - Development of Pilot Program and Draft Guidelines (complete)
 - CIAP Approval of Pilot Program (Current)
 - Judicial Council Approval to Conduct Pilot (October 2026)
- Phase 2: Program Setup (Late 2026 – Early 2027)
- Phase 3: Pilot Implementation (2027 – 2028, with possibly more years)
- Phase 4: Evaluation and Policy Consideration (Post-Pilot)
- Phase 5: Potential Broader Implementation

Requested Action

- Approve the proposed Pilot Program
- Advance the proposal to the Judicial Council for consideration on October 16, 2026

Discussion/Questions





Judicial Council of California

455 Golden Gate Avenue · San Francisco, California 94102-3688

Telephone 415-865-4200 · Fax 415-865-4205

MEMORANDUM

Date

May 11, 2026

Action Requested

Please review for approval to conduct pilot program

To

Court Interpreters Advisory Panel

Deadline

May 13, 2026

From

Douglas G. Denton
Principal Manager, Language Access Services
Leadership Support Services

Contact

Russell McGregor, Senior Analyst
Language Access Implementation Unit
Language Access Services
916-643-6988

Subject

Conduct a pilot to develop findings, recommendations, and updated ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines

russell.mcgregor@jud.ca.gov

Issue

The Judicial Council continues to face a shortage of certified American Sign Language (ASL) court interpreters, which can result in delays in proceedings and barriers to timely language access for Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users. In response, Judicial Council staff developed draft *ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines* to support the limited and structured use of qualified ASL generalist interpreters in appropriate court settings.

Preliminary data indicates that ASL generalist interpreters are already being used one out of every five ASL-interpreted court events, despite the absence of formal statewide guidance. In practice, this has resulted in inconsistent application across courts, with individual jurisdictions determining when and how such interpreters may be used. The proposed pilot is intended to address this gap by establishing a structured framework to guide appropriate use, promote consistency, and ensure effective communication.

The Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee (ILAS) of the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) convened on February 3, 2026, to discuss and advance the pilot project for developing guidelines for ASL generalists, who hold national certification as ASL interpreters, to work in California courts assisting litigants under specific conditions.

During this meeting, subcommittee members provided substantial feedback, which led to revisions of the relevant documents. The pilot is essential for thoroughly evaluating the proposed guidelines, identifying best practices, and ensuring that findings and recommendations are grounded in real data and stakeholder input. Implementing the pilot will clarify both the benefits and challenges, thereby informing Language Access Services staff, who will develop recommendations to CIAP for the final *ASL Interpreter Generalist Guidelines* that support effective language access in court settings.

Attachment 1, *American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Interpreter Pilot Program*, describes the proposed pilot program framework, including scope, participation model, and implementation timeline. The pilot is expected to be developed in 2026, implemented in participating courts in 2027, and evaluated following a defined period of data collection.

Attachment 2, draft *ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines*, establishes qualification requirements, training expectations, and limitations on generalist use in non-complex court settings. These guidelines will be tested and refined throughout the pilot.

Upon completion of the pilot, Judicial Council staff will analyze findings, including data on interpreter use, performance, and court user experience, and will present recommendations to CIAP and the Judicial Council. This process will inform whether modifications to the guidelines are necessary prior to broader implementation. This approach is also expected to support development of a more sustainable ASL interpreter workforce by creating a structured pathway for qualified generalist interpreters to gain court-related experience under defined conditions, while maintaining appropriate safeguards for court users.

Public Comment

This proposal to conduct a pilot will not be circulated for public comment. Recommending a pilot falls within the authority of an advisory body and the Judicial Council to support the development of recommendations and policy.¹ There is an urgent need for more court ASL interpreters, and creating structured pathways within the court will benefit both litigants and aspiring court interpreters as they work toward certification.² After the pilot concludes, findings and updated *ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines* will be presented to CIAP for review and

¹ See, for example, Judicial Council of Cal., Advisory Com. Rep., [Language Access Plan: Translation and Educational Products, Development Plan for Remaining Materials, and Video Remote Interpreting Pilot Project](#) (June 13, 2016).

² See Judicial Council of Cal., [California Court Interpreter Workforce Study](#) (2025).

approval. Once approved, the guidelines will be released for public comment before being submitted to the council for final review and approval.

Costs and Staffing

The pilot will engage a qualified consultant to assist Judicial Council Language Access Services with pilot implementation, evaluation, and development of findings from the pilot. These findings will support staff in preparing recommendations and updating the *ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines*. Funding for the consultant will be provided from the Language Access Services program budget, and the pilot program will be managed by existing staff positions.

Recommendation

The Interpreter Language Access Subcommittee (ILAS) recommends that CIAP approve the following recommendations:

1. Conduct a pilot program as detailed in Attachment 1.
2. Following the pilot, present findings to CIAP and the council, including updating draft *ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines*, which are detailed in Attachment 2.

These recommendations will be considered at the Judicial Council business meeting on October 16, 2026.

Attachments

Attachment 1: ASL Generalist Interpreter Pilot Program Framework

Attachment 2: Draft ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines

American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Interpreter Pilot Program

1. Purpose of the Pilot Program

The Judicial Council is proposing a Pilot Program to evaluate the limited use of American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Interpreters in California courts.

The Pilot Program is intended to:

- Expand access to court services for Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users
- Address the ongoing shortage of certified ASL court interpreters
- Develop a structured pathway for ASL Generalist Interpreters to gain relevant court experience
- Collect data to inform future policy, rulemaking, and interpreter workforce development

The Pilot Program is designed to be controlled, limited in scope, and subject to ongoing evaluation.

Participation in the Pilot Program is intended to support development toward court interpreter certification.

2. Background and Need

California courts continue to face a shortage of certified ASL court interpreters following the discontinuation of the Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf in 2016.

The Judicial Council has taken steps to expand the certified interpreter pool, including recognition of the Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters Court Interpreter Certification. Despite these efforts, a gap remains.

As a result:

- Courts may experience delays in securing certified ASL court interpreters
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users may face barriers to timely access

National research conducted by the National Center for State Courts identifies the structured use of ASL Generalist Interpreters as a potential strategy to address these challenges while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

3. Program Approach

The Pilot Program adopts a Guidelines-based approach rather than a statutory change.

This approach:

- Defines when and how ASL Generalists may be used
- Establishes training, supervision, and qualification requirements
- Limits use to non-complex settings
- Includes safeguards to protect due process
- Allows for data-driven evaluation before any long-term policy decisions

ASL Generalist Interpreters are not a replacement for certified ASL court interpreters and may only be used in limited, defined circumstances.

4. Scope of the Pilot Program

The Pilot Program will:

- Operate in approximately 6 to 10 volunteer courts
- Include courts representing different geographic regions and court sizes
- Be limited to non-complex, non-evidentiary settings as defined in the Guidelines

Participation in the Pilot Program is voluntary for courts.

Allowable settings are defined in the ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines and include: Self-Help Services, Clerk Interactions, Court-Mandated Programs, Routine Procedural Hearings, Minor Traffic Matters, Administrative Probation Meetings, Small Claims, Limited Procedural Emergencies, and Jury Orientation.

The program will not allow ASL Generalists to be used in trials, testimony, or other high-risk proceedings.

5. Interpreter Participation Model

The Pilot Program includes multiple participation opportunities designed to support training and controlled use of ASL Generalist Interpreters.

These participation types may occur independently and are not required to be completed in sequence:

- **Observation:** Generalists may observe court proceedings to develop familiarity with courtroom procedures, roles, and communication dynamics
- **Supervised Practice Participation:** Generalists may participate in limited interpreting activities under the supervision of a certified ASL court interpreter, consistent with the restrictions outlined in the Guidelines
- **Independent Assignment:** Generalists may be assigned in limited, approved settings where use is appropriate under the Guidelines

Participation in the Pilot Program is intended to support development toward court interpreter certification.

6. Safeguards and Protections

The Pilot Program is designed to balance access needs with due process protections.

Safeguards include:

- Use limited to clearly defined, non-complex settings
- Prohibition on use in trials, testimony, and contested matters
- Requirement for good-faith efforts to secure certified interpreters when required
- Judicial determination of appropriateness for each assignment
- On-the-record findings for in-court use
- Requirement to pause proceedings if complexity increases
- Requirement that Generalists notify the court if they cannot continue

Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users will be informed when a Generalist interpreter is used and may request a certified interpreter where feasible. Courts may also utilize a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), when available and appropriate, to support clear communication for Deaf or hard-of-hearing court users.

7. Data Collection and Evaluation

The Pilot Program is designed to be data-driven.

Data will be collected through:

- Generalist interpreter reporting after each assignment
- Participating court reporting on usage and outcomes
- Feedback from judicial officers, court staff, and court users
- Tracking of complaints and performance concerns

Data collected during the Pilot Program will be used to evaluate and refine:

- Allowable settings
- Qualification requirements
- Training and supervision models
- Safeguards and operational practices

Evaluation and refinement will occur throughout the duration of the Pilot Program.

8. Program Development and Implementation Timeline

Phase 1: Program Development and Approval (2026)

- Finalize draft Guidelines with Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) approval
- Present the Pilot Program and Guidelines to the Judicial Council for approval
- Develop training framework and materials
- Identify potential participating courts

Phase 2: Program Setup (Late 2026 – Early 2027)

- Establish ASL Generalist interpreter roster
- Conduct outreach to interpreters, including in the Court Interpreter Data Collection System
- Identify and confirm participating courts
- Finalize operational procedures and reporting processes
- Provide orientation and training for participating courts and interpreters

Phase 3: Pilot Implementation (2027 – 2028, possibly more years)

- Launch Pilot Program in selected courts
- Implement Guidelines and reporting requirements
- Collect data on interpreter use, performance, and outcomes
- Monitor implementation and identify risks or issues

Phase 4: Evaluation and Policy Consideration (Post-Pilot)

- Analyze data and stakeholder feedback
- Present findings to CIAP and the Judicial Council
- Determine whether to:
 - Expand the program
 - Modify program structure or Guidelines
 - Discontinue the program
 - Formalize the program for broader implementation

9. Expected Outcomes

The Pilot Program is expected to:

- Improve access to court services in limited, appropriate settings
- Reduce delays associated with interpreter shortages
- Support development of a pipeline from ASL Generalist Interpreters to court-certified interpreters
- Provide structured training and experience opportunities for interpreters
- Generate data to support informed policy decisions
- Maintain due process protections for Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users

10. Cost and Resource Impact

The Pilot Program is not expected to result in additional costs to the Judicial Council.

- The program does not require new infrastructure, technology, or centralized staffing
- Development of Guidelines, training expectations, and reporting tools will be conducted within existing Judicial Council resources

Participating courts will implement the Pilot Program using existing funding and operational structures.

- Courts will continue to contract with or employ interpreters using their current budgeting processes
- Use of ASL Generalist Interpreters will occur within existing interpreter services budgets
- No additional funding allocation is required for participation in the Pilot Program

The Pilot Program is designed to be cost-neutral at the state level while allowing courts flexibility to address local interpreter needs.

11. Program Considerations and Future Development

Implementation of the Pilot Program may require further development or clarification in the following areas:

11.1 Interpreter Compensation

The Judicial Council's [*Payment Policies for Independent Contractor Interpreters*](#) (revised 7/1/21) are the current guidelines for contractor compensation.

Existing payment structures do not distinguish between ASL Generalist Interpreters and certified ASL court interpreters in a way that reflects differences in qualification, training, and assignment scope.

As part of the Pilot Program, the Judicial Council may evaluate:

- Whether a distinct compensation structure is appropriate for ASL Generalist Interpreters
- How compensation aligns with Evidence Code section 754 requirements regarding prevailing rates
- Whether adjustments are needed to support recruitment, retention, and appropriate use of interpreters within the program

11.2 Training Resources and Materials

Additional training materials may be developed to support the Pilot Program, including:

- Court process orientation materials for ASL Generalist Interpreters
- Visual or recorded materials explaining courtroom procedures

11.3 Court Implementation Practices

Participating courts may develop local practices to support implementation, including:

- Scheduling and assignment protocols
- Coordination between interpreter coordinators and judicial officers
- Internal guidance on identifying appropriate cases

11.4 Data Collection and Reporting Tools

The Judicial Council may refine reporting tools during the Pilot Program to ensure:

- Data collection is consistent across courts
- Reporting requirements are not overly burdensome
- Information collected supports meaningful evaluation

11.5 Program Scope Adjustments

Based on data and stakeholder feedback, the Judicial Council may consider adjustments to:

- Allowable settings
- Qualification requirements
- Training expectations
- Safeguards and operational procedures

12. Conclusion

The ASL Generalist Interpreter Pilot Program represents a measured, data-driven approach to addressing interpreter shortages while maintaining the integrity of court proceedings.

By combining structured training, clearly defined limitations, and strong safeguards, the Judicial Council seeks to expand access to justice while supporting the development of a sustainable ASL interpreter workforce.

ASL Generalist Interpreter Guidelines

1. Purpose

These Guidelines establish a structured framework for the limited use of American Sign Language (ASL) Generalist Interpreters in California courts under a Judicial Council authorized Pilot Program.

The Pilot Program is intended to:

- Expand meaningful language access in appropriate, limited settings
- Address the shortage of certified ASL court interpreters
- Provide a pathway for ASL Generalist Interpreters to develop court-related skills
- Support data collection to inform future policy decisions

These Guidelines are intended to be implemented in a manner consistent with applicable state and federal law and shall not be construed to limit the obligation of courts to provide effective communication to Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

ASL Generalist Interpreters are not a substitute for certified ASL court interpreters and may be used only in limited circumstances defined in these Guidelines.

The Pilot Program is expected to evolve as data and feedback are collected.

2. Scope of Application

These Guidelines apply only to courts participating in the Pilot Program.

Use of ASL Generalist Interpreters is expected to be limited and applied conservatively.

3. Definitions

3.1 ASL Generalist Interpreter

A qualified interpreter who holds an approved generalist certification but does not hold a court-specific ASL interpreter certification recognized by the Judicial Council.

3.2 Certified ASL Court Interpreter

An interpreter who holds a Judicial Council recognized court certification for American Sign Language legal interpreting. This includes:

- The former Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L), when maintained in good standing;

- The Texas Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Court Interpreter Certification (CIC); and
- Any other certification recognized by the Judicial Council in the future.

3.3 Non-Complex Proceeding

A proceeding where communication is:

- Procedural, informational, or limited in scope
- Manageable in pace and structure
- Not dependent on formal testimony or structured evidentiary presentation
- Not involving waiver or adjudication of constitutional or statutory rights

The presence of limited factual disagreement or narrative does not, by itself, make a proceeding complex. When determining whether a proceeding remains non-complex, courts should exercise appropriate judicial discretion and maintain heightened attentiveness to indicators of increasing complexity.

4. Interpreter Qualification Requirements

4.1 Generalist Certification

Interpreters must possess an approved certification demonstrating professional competence in ASL interpreting. Certifications must be current and maintained in good standing with the issuing certifying body or organization.

Approved ASL generalist certifications include:

RID former and current credentials

- National Interpreter Certification (NIC)
- National Interpreter Certification Advanced (NIC A)
- National Interpreter Certification Master (NIC M)
- Certificate of Interpretation (CI)
- Certificate of Transliteration (CT)
- Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC)
- Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit Relay (CLIP R)
- Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI)

Board for Evaluation of Interpreters

- Advanced Certification Level IV (BEI IV/ Advance)
- Master Certification Level V (BEI V/ Master)
- Intermediary Certification Level IV (BEI IV)
- Intermediary Certification Level V (BEI V)

National Association of the Deaf

- Advanced Certification Level IV (NAD IV)
- Master Certification Level V (NAD V)

Only certifications listed above are approved.

4.2 Experience

- A minimum of five years of professional ASL interpreting experience post certification.

4.3 Required Training

- Completion of a minimum of 40 hours of legal interpreter training approved by the Judicial Council or recognized through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
- At least 10 hours of the 40 hours of legal interpreter training must include supervised court-related practice conducted under the supervision of a certified ASL court interpreter recognized by the Judicial Council
- Up to 20 hours of supervised practice may count toward the total legal interpreter training requirement of 40 hours
- Completion of the Judicial Council online training modules for ASL Interpreters Working in the California Courts
- Completion of Judicial Council live virtual ethics training
- Acknowledgment of and agreement to comply with the [Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters](#)
- Completion of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Court Interpreter Written Examination prior to supervised practice or independent assignment

4.4 Recency and Post-Certification Requirements

Within the interpreter's current or most recent continuing education cycle, the following must be completed:

- Legal interpreter training hours
- Court observation hours
- Supervised court-related practice hours

All training, observation, and supervised practice used to qualify for participation must be completed after certification and within the current or most recent continuing education cycle, unless otherwise approved.

Interpreters must maintain documentation demonstrating:

- Training completion
- Observation hours
- Supervised practice verification

- Ethics acknowledgment
- Supervisor verification (when applicable)
- Summary of exposure to legal settings
- Passage of the Court Interpreter Written Examination

The Judicial Council may review these materials to determine eligibility and continued participation.

5. Interpreter Participation Model

5.1 Observation

ASL Generalist Interpreters may observe proceedings:

- In any court setting
- In person or remotely
- When proceedings are public or permission is granted

Observation does not include interpreting responsibilities.

5.2 Supervised Practice

ASL Generalist Interpreters may participate in limited interpreting activities under supervision.

Requirements:

- A certified ASL court interpreter recognized by the Judicial Council must be present and actively monitoring
- Participation must be limited in scope and duration and must not involve primary responsibility
- The supervising interpreter may intervene or assume full responsibility at any time
- Participation must be approved by the court
- Participation must be approved by all parties, including the Deaf or hard-of-hearing individual

Generalists may not interpret:

- Testimony
- Legal argument
- Waiver of rights

5.3 Independent Assignment

ASL Generalist Interpreters may be assigned independently only in approved Pilot Program settings and only after all requirements in these Guidelines are satisfied.

Certified ASL court interpreters shall be used whenever available and appropriate. Generalists may be used only when a certified interpreter is unavailable or not required under these Guidelines.

The court retains final authority to determine whether assignment of a Generalist interpreter is appropriate. These Guidelines are intended to support that determination by providing a structured framework for appropriate use.

6. Allowable Use

Use of ASL Generalist Interpreters is limited to settings where communication remains non-complex and predictable in structure and scope.

6.1 Self-Help Services and Clerk Interactions

These interactions are informational and procedural, typically involving explanation of forms, filing requirements, and court processes. They do not involve adjudication or disputed issues.

6.2 Court-Mandated Programs

Court-mandated programs generally involve structured, instructional communication such as orientations, workshops, or compliance briefings. These settings do not involve evidentiary presentation or judicial decision-making.

6.3 Routine Procedural Hearings

Routine procedural hearings include short, non-contested appearances such as status updates, compliance checks, or scheduling matters. Communication is limited in scope and focused on case management rather than substantive legal issues.

6.4 Minor Traffic Matters (Non-Criminal)

These matters are procedural in nature and typically involve standardized communication related to scheduling, compliance, or disposition of infractions. They do not involve testimony or risk of incarceration.

Generalists shall not be used for any traffic matter involving criminal charges, juvenile proceedings, contested evidence.

6.5 Administrative Probation Meetings

Routine probation meetings involve administrative communication regarding reporting requirements and compliance. These meetings do not involve adjudication or legal argument.

6.6 Small Claims

Small claims proceedings involve simplified procedures and are often based on narrative communication rather than formal legal arguments.

Generalists may be used where communication remains manageable and consistent with a non-complex proceeding.

Use is not appropriate where:

- Multiple Deaf or hard-of-hearing participants are present
- Communication becomes rapid or difficult to manage
- Formal testimony or structured evidentiary presentation is required
- The court anticipates significant credibility determinations

Proceedings must be paused if complexity increases.

6.7 Limited Procedural Emergencies

Generalists may be used in limited procedural emergencies where immediate communication is required and delay is not feasible. Use is restricted to procedural or informational communication only.

6.8 Jury Orientation

Generalists may be used for jury orientation, which involves standardized instructions and informational content. Certified ASL court interpreters are required for all subsequent jury proceedings.

7. Prohibited Use

Generalists shall not be used for:

- Trials
- Testimony
- Contested hearings
- Criminal matters beyond minor infractions
- Juvenile matters
- Domestic violence matters
- Any matter involving waiver of constitutional or statutory rights

For purposes of these Guidelines, testimony includes any structured presentation of facts to establish or dispute claims before the court.

8. Due Diligence and Interpreter Unavailability

Courts must make good-faith efforts to secure a certified ASL court interpreter when one is required.

8.1 Defined Unavailability

A certified ASL court interpreter may be considered unavailable only after documented good-faith efforts to secure services have been unsuccessful.

Good-faith efforts include:

- Multiple documented contact attempts
- Outreach for each assignment
- Allowing reasonable time for response

Unavailability may include lack of response, lack of availability within the required timeframe, or inability to secure services consistent with prevailing court practices.

Courts may not rely solely on prior assumptions, general availability designations, or convenience.

8.2 Cost Considerations

Cost alone shall not be used to determine interpreter unavailability.

In limited circumstances, cost may be considered as one factor where interpreter rates substantially exceed the prevailing rate and documented efforts to secure services at reasonable rates have been unsuccessful.

8.3 Use of Generalists

ASL Generalist Interpreters may not be used as a routine scheduling or budget alternative. Use is appropriate only after documented efforts to secure a certified interpreter have been exhausted.

9. On-the-Record Findings

For in-court proceedings, the court must document:

- That a certified interpreter is unavailable after due diligence
- That the matter is appropriate for Generalist use

The court or interpreter should state on the record that the interpreter is not court-certified and is not qualified to interpret testimony, legal argument, motions, or waiver of constitutional or statutory rights.

10. Managing Complexity

If a matter becomes complex, the proceeding must be paused and reassessed. Indicators of increasing complexity may include shifts in communication demands, contested issues, or the introduction of testimony or evidence requiring detailed explanation or legal evaluation.

The determination that a matter has become complex may be made by the judicial officer, by the supervising certified ASL court interpreter, or by the Generalist interpreter, who has an obligation to notify the court if they believe they can no longer provide effective communication within the scope of these Guidelines.

11. Protections for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Court Users

Use of ASL Generalist Interpreters must not diminish the rights of Deaf and hard-of-hearing court users. Courts must ensure effective communication consistent with state and federal law

11.1 Notification

Court users must be informed when a Generalist interpreter is assigned, including that the interpreter is not court-certified and is limited in scope.

11.2 Right to Request Certified Interpreter

Court users may request a certified ASL court interpreter. Requests should be honored where feasible and consistent with applicable law and court policy.

11.3 Use of Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs)

When available and appropriate, courts may utilize a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI) to support clear communication and assist the Deaf or hard-of-hearing court user in understanding the Generalist interpreter's role and qualifications.

11.4 Ongoing Assessment

The court must monitor whether communication remains effective. If communication is not effective, the proceeding must be paused and reassessed.

12. Reporting and Oversight

- ASL Generalist interpreters must submit reports following each assignment
- Courts must provide periodic reporting as part of the Pilot Program
- The Judicial Council will monitor implementation and identify risks

Possible data points may include frequency of Generalist use, the types of proceedings in which they were assigned, instances in which proceedings were paused due to increasing complexity, feedback from court users, and outcomes of due diligence efforts. Final evaluation metrics will be developed by Language Access Services. Data collected will be used to evaluate and refine the Pilot Program.

13. Complaints and Accountability

Complaints regarding ASL Generalist Interpreters will be addressed based on the nature of the concern, with a distinction between conduct in court and underlying interpreting competence.

13.1 In-Court Conduct and Professional Behavior

Complaints related to conduct during court proceedings may include ethical violations, inappropriate demeanor, or failure to follow court protocol.

These complaints are reviewed by the Judicial Council and may result in corrective action, additional training, or removal from the Pilot Program.

13.2 Linguistic Competence and Interpreting Quality

Complaints related to interpreting quality or language competence may be referred to the interpreter's certifying body for review under their respective standards.

13.3 Judicial Council Authority

The Judicial Council retains authority over participation in the Pilot Program and may take action, including removal, based on conduct, performance concerns, or information received from certifying bodies.