

Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force (ITF) Charge

Purpose:

The Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force advises the Judicial Council on implementation of the recommendations contained in the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts*, which was adopted by the council on January 22, 2015.

Date Established: March, 2015

Charge:

The Judicial Council's Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force advises the council on implementation of the recommendations issued by the Joint Working Group for California's Language Access Plan (2013–2015) in the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* (adopted by the council on January 22, 2015). The Language Access Plan provides a consistent statewide approach to ensure language access for all of California's approximately 7 million limited English proficient (LEP) residents and potential court users in all 58 superior courts. The task force will include representatives of the key stakeholders in the provision of language access services in the courts, including, but not limited to, judicial officers, court administrators, court interpreters, legal services providers, and community members. The task force's charge is to turn the Language Access Plan into a practical roadmap for courts by creating a plan for full implementation in all 58 superior courts. Primary responsibilities of the task force include:

- Create an implementation plan for the Language Access Plan to present to the Judicial Council and to guide the work of the task force and the courts to make the strategic plan a reality;
- Develop cost estimate for implementing the recommendations;
- Assess the feasibility of the phasing process outlined in the plan and adjust where necessary based on operational feasibility and resource availability;
- Propose rules of court, forms, and Judicial Council–sponsored legislation for the council and its internal committees to consider;
- Create and distribute work products (including bench guides, tool kits, and others);
- Coordinate with related advisory groups on implementation efforts where appropriate; and
- Develop mechanisms to oversee and monitor the implementation of the plan.

LAP Implementation Task Force (ITF) – Potential Subcommittees

Potential Subcommittees: Note: subcommittees can either be standing subcommittees that are subject to the open meeting rule, or small ad hoc subcommittees (less than half the members) that work on finite projects and are not subject to the open meeting rule. The ITF may also choose to focus on certain projects and/or delegate other projects to other committees or staff.

Potential Topic(s)	Potential Recommendations	Staffing (TBD)	Related Advisory Bodies
Budget and LAP Monitoring	Note: Begin inventory of existing language access resources (to include gap analysis); #60: identify LAP costs; #56: advocate for sufficient funding; #61: develop LAP compliance and monitoring system; #62 and #63: develop single complaint form and interaction with local complaint processes.	CLASP and ITF consultant	CIAP Annual Agenda includes # 9 and 70: provisional qualification process, Rule 2.893 amendment; #64: develop process for complaints regarding court interpreters; Civil and Small Claims could also assist on specific LAP areas (e.g., #75: waiver policy)
Technological Solutions	#12–17: VRI recommendations	IT and ITF consultant	CTAC (IT)
Translation, Signage and Tools for Courts	#36: establish Translation Committee; #37: create statewide multilingual samples and templates; #52: create benchcard on language access; #66: create statewide repository of language access resources	CFCC and ITF consultant (Note: tool-kit could eventually include new statewide complaint form, tools regarding data collection)	Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness (CFCC)
Language Access Education and Standards	#45, #46, #48, #50: develop training and standards	CJER (with CLASP as a resource as appropriate for court interpreter training)	CJER Governing Committee (CJER)

Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force (ITF) Major Milestones/Timeline through June 2016

Date	Task
April 29, 2015	First ITF meeting by phone. Discuss and rank LAP priorities to help with formation of 2016–17 Budget Change Proposal (BCP).
May 18, 2015 (TBD)	TCBAC meeting (ITF to submit priorities for 2016–17 BCP)
June 17, 2015 (TBD)	First ITF in-person meeting (Note: the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) will conduct its in-person meeting on 6/18)
June 2015 (TBD)	By this date, (1) ITF approves LAP implementation work plan, including subcommittee priorities and estimated time-frames for completion; (2) submit Annual Agenda for ITF to Judicial Council’s Executive and Planning.
June 2015 (TBD)	Judicial Council reviews budget concepts to determine what BCPs the branch will pursue and directs staff to draft.
August 2015 (TBD)	First ITF community outreach (non-business) meeting.
September or October 2015 (TBD)	By this date, target date for completion of immediate phase 1 subcommittee products (e.g., LAP monitoring system, statewide repository of resources, tool-kit).
September 2015 (TBD)	By mid-September, BCPs drafted pursuant to the council’s direction are submitted to the Department of Finance (DOF).
October 2015 (TBD)	Potential ITF presentation to Judicial Council regarding LAP implementation progress, including challenges and successes (see below re: timing).
November-December 2015	Chief Justice meets with Governor regarding Branch budget issues.
December 2015 (TBD)	By this date, target completion for major LAP phase 1 deliverables (e.g., complaint process, LAP monitoring process, statewide repository of tools, etc.).
December 2015 (TBD)	Second ITF in-person meeting (NOTE: depending on timing and progress, we could do the second ITF in-person meeting <i>before</i> a council presentation).
January 10, 2016	Governor introduces his proposed budget.
February 2016	Spring Finance letters are submitted to DOF for consideration of BCPs not presented for the Jan. 10 budget.
February or March 2016 (TBD)	Second ITF community outreach (non-business) meeting.
March to mid-May 2016	Legislature conducts budget hearings on budget proposals.
March 2016 (TBD)	By this date, target date for completion of any remaining phase 1 subcommittee products (e.g., VRI technical guidelines, translation protocols)
April or May 2016 (TBD)	Third ITF in-person meeting.
Mid-May 2016	Governor releases May Revision for the FY 2016–2017 budget.

Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force (ITF) Major Milestones/Timeline through June 2016

Date	Task
Late-May to mid-June 2016	Legislature conducts budget hearings on May Revision and other budget proposals.
June 2016	By this date: submit status report to E&P and council regarding phase 1 (2015) LAP implementation progress.
June 2016	Constitutional deadline for Legislature to pass 2016-2017 Budget Bill; Governor acts on Budget Bill and related trailer bills by July 1.
July 2016	New fiscal year begins. By this date: Launch phase 2 of LAP implementation (2016-2017), including revised LAP work plan with a revised timetable; secure any necessary consultants for continuing LAP implementation.

CALIFORNIA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts

January 22, 2015

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Following extensive gathering of stakeholder input, the Joint Working Group for California's Language Access Plan has prepared the *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts*. This Executive Summary provides an overview on the formation of the plan, along with a summary of highlights of stakeholder input and recommendations. The Joint Working Group's objective was to draft recommendations that would create a branchwide approach to providing language access services to court users throughout the state while accommodating an individual court's need for a large degree of flexibility in implementing the plan recommendations. A primary goal is to incorporate language access as part of the core court services. A draft plan was posted on the California Courts website for public comment on July 31, with the comment period continuing through September 29, 2014. Following the public comment process, the draft plan was revised and a final plan was presented to the Judicial Council for its review and adoption.

Previous Council Action

The California judicial branch has long supported the need to expand language access services in the courts. However, the branch has not yet adopted a comprehensive statewide language access plan that will provide recommendations, guidance, and a consistent statewide approach to ensure language access to all limited English proficiency (LEP) court users. In June 2013, the Joint Working Group for California's Language Access Plan was established to create a plan that would serve all of California's LEP court users. The working group was comprised of members of both the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel and the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness, along with other stakeholders and a language access consultant.

Methodology and Process

California is the most diverse state in the country, with approximately 7 million LEP residents and potential court users, dispersed over a vast geographic area, who speak more than 200 languages. Therefore, the effort to develop a comprehensive statewide language access plan included several forums to engage court leaders and other interested language access stakeholders across the state in order to obtain valuable input. The Joint Working Group conducted a series of listening sessions with court executive officers and presiding judges, court interpreter organizations (including the California Federation of Interpreters and contract interpreter groups), and legal services providers. At the listening sessions, participants reviewed the draft outline for the language access plan and discussed the significant challenges and opportunities for the California courts regarding language access.

Then in late February and early March 2014, three public hearings on language access were held, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. The notice for the public hearings—including the agenda, a fact sheet, and the draft outline—were provided in multiple languages

and posted on the California Courts website.¹ At the hearings, experts provided input from local, state, national, health-care, court, and legislative perspectives. Language access through interpreters was provided, as relevant to each region, and the hearings were also accessible by web simulcast. After the hearings, audio and written comments, as well as prepared presentations from panelists, were posted to the Joint Working Group’s web page.² The thoughtful, varied, and valuable perspectives provided by all individuals and groups were instrumental in developing the draft plan.

After the public hearings, the Joint Working Group began the complex task of reviewing and analyzing all stakeholder input to formulate appropriate recommendations for the draft plan.

Concerns of Stakeholders

Although the range of topics covered, the insights shared, and the experiences relayed were extensive, some salient themes surfaced throughout the planning process:

- LEP speakers who need to use the judicial system for a variety of civil cases—from family law to domestic violence to evictions—are unable to meaningfully access court processes because of language barriers. In critical proceedings such as hearings and trials, LEP court users are often forced to resort to family members or friends to communicate with the court. These untrained interpreters are rarely equipped to accurately and completely assist with communication between the court and the LEP litigant. Failure to ensure proper communication can lead to basic misunderstandings and confusion, the loss by LEP court users of important legal rights, or an inability to access remedies.
- Language access must be provided at all critical or significant points of contact that LEP persons have with the court system. LEP parties are often unable to handle even the very first steps in seeking legal recourse, such as knowing what remedies or legal protections may be available and where to seek them out, knowing what legal procedures to follow, and understanding how and where to fill out and file court forms.
- Language access must start before an LEP court user reaches the courthouse doors; it must begin with community outreach, public education efforts, and web-based access. Language access services must be available as an LEP court user enters the courthouse and at all points of contact within the courthouse, such as self-help centers, alternative dispute resolution services, and clerks’ counters.
- Court administrators in particular provided comments on the critical need for increased funding for the judicial branch, concerned that, without additional funds, compliance with the language access plan would present difficulties or lead to a reduction of court

¹ See LAP Joint Working Group web page, at www.courts.ca.gov/LAP.htm.

² *Ibid.*

services in other areas. Expansion of language access services, though supported by all stakeholders, poses fiscal demands that in part can be met by efficiencies in the provision of language services but, more important, will require additional funding appropriated for that purpose and not by shifting already scarce resources from other court services.

- Any efforts to improve the provision of language access services should include a more comprehensive mechanism for collecting data on LEP communities in California. Traditional sources of demographic data underestimate the existing numbers of LEP residents in the state, in particular with regard to linguistically isolated communities, migrant workers, and speakers of indigenous languages. Similarly, these data sources fail to adequately track emerging languages.
- As services are expanded, questions remain about whether the existing pool of certified and registered court interpreters is sufficient to meet the possible demand, because projections about the cost of expanding language access throughout all court proceedings and points of contact vary widely. Estimates will need to be made, and must include all related costs, such as technology, training, and signage.
- Technologies such as video remote interpreting, telephonic interpretation, web-based access, and multilingual audiovisual tools have an important role to play in the statewide provision of language access. However, courts must exercise care to ensure that the use of technology is appropriate for the setting involved, that safeguards are in place for ensuring due process rights, and that high quality is maintained.
- Any effort to ensure meaningful language access to the court system for all Californians must include partnerships with stakeholders. These stakeholders include community-based providers like social services organizations, domestic violence advocates, mental health providers, and substance abuse treatment programs; justice partners such as legal services organizations, court interpreter organizations, district attorneys, public defenders, law enforcement, jails, probation departments, and administrative agencies; and language access experts.
- The branch should become more active in recruiting potential interpreters at the earliest stages of their education, particularly in high schools, and then expanding to community college and university programs. Courts should create partnerships with educational providers to develop a pipeline of potential interpreters and bilingual court employees.
- The need is critical for training judicial officers, court staff, and security personnel in (1) identifying and addressing the needs of court users at all points of contact with the court; (2) understanding distinct features of the various ethnic communities, which can ensure respectful treatment of LEP court users; (3) ensuring that interpreters are, in

fact, certified or are properly provisionally qualified; and (4) conducting courtroom proceedings in a manner that facilitates the maximum quality of language access.

Plan Goals

The Joint Working Group identified the following eight strategic goals, which guided the development of the plan:

- **Goal 1: Improve Early Identification of and Data Collection on Language Needs**
The Judicial Council will identify statewide language access needs of limited English proficiency Californians, and the courts will identify the specific language access needs within local communities, doing so as early as possible in court interactions with LEP Californians.
- **Goal 2: Provide Qualified Language Access Services in All Judicial Proceedings**
By 2017, and beginning immediately where resources permit, qualified interpreters will be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all courtroom proceedings and, by 2020, in all court-ordered, court-operated events.³
- **Goal 3: Provide Language Access Services at All Points of Contact Outside Judicial Proceedings**
By 2020, courts will provide language access services at all points of contact in the California courts. Courts will provide notice to the public of available language services.
- **Goal 4: Provide High Quality Multilingual Translation and Signage**
The Judicial Council, assisted by the courts, will identify best practices and resources for the highest quality of document translation and court signage in all appropriate languages.
- **Goal 5: Expand High Quality Language Access Through the Recruitment and Training of Language Access Providers**
The courts and the Judicial Council will ensure that all providers of language access services deliver high quality services. Courts and the Judicial Council will establish proficiency standards for bilingual staff and volunteers appropriate to the service being delivered, offer ongoing training for all language services providers, and proactively recruit persons interested in becoming interpreters or bilingual court staff.
- **Goal 6: Provide Judicial Branch Training on Language Access Policies and Procedures**
Judicial officers, court administrators, and court staff will receive training on language access policies, procedures, and standards, so they can respond consistently and

³ Within the context of this plan, the term “provided” (as in “qualified court interpreters will be provided”) means at no cost to the LEP court user and without cost recovery.

effectively to the needs of LEP court users, while providing culturally competent language access services.

- **Goal 7: Conduct Outreach to Communities Regarding Language Access Services**
The Judicial Council and the courts will undertake comprehensive outreach to, and engage in partnership with, LEP communities and the organizations that serve them.
- **Goal 8: Identify Systems, Funding, and Legislation Necessary for Plan Implementation and Language Access Management**
In order to complete the systematic expansion of language access services, the Judicial Council will (1) secure adequate funding that does not result in a reduction of other court services; (2) propose appropriate changes to the law, both in statutory amendments and changes to the rules of court; and (3) develop systems for implementing the Language Access Plan, for monitoring the provision of language access services, and for maintaining the highest quality of language services.

Policy and Cost Implications

The *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* proposes an incremental approach to expand and enhance language access in the California courts for all of California's 7 million LEP residents and potential court users. California has over 1,800 highly trained certified and registered court interpreters, significantly more than any other state, who provide 215,000 interpreter service days annually at a cost of over \$92 million each year.⁴ Expansion of language access services will by necessity require creative solutions and securing additional court funding. As indicated by stakeholders during the planning process, however, much work remains to be done, especially in the civil arena, to ensure that all court users have meaningful access to the state's courts. Expansion of language access services will by necessity require creative solutions and additional court funding, without diminishing other core court operations.

One of the plan's key goals (Goal 2) is to ensure that, "By 2017, and beginning immediately where resources permit, qualified interpreters will be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all courtroom proceedings and, by 2020, in all court-ordered, court-operated events." Many civil cases such as evictions, guardianships, conservatorships, and family matters involving custody of children and termination of parental rights are critical to the lives of Californians. Court-ordered and court-operated programs, services, and events, such as settlement conferences or mandatory mediation, are also essential to the fair resolution of disputes. It is therefore the intent of the Language Access Plan that the phase-in of interpreter services in civil proceedings and court-ordered, court-operated events be instituted immediately and be ongoing throughout the process of implementation of full language access.

⁴ Total statewide court interpreter expenditures incurred during 2013–2014 that are eligible to be reimbursed from the Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF) Program 45.45 (court interpreter) totaled \$92,471,280.

Implementation Efforts

Having completed its task, the Joint Working Group recommends immediate formation of two groups that would report to the Judicial Council's Executive and Planning Committee: (1) a Language Access Implementation Task Force, which would develop and recommend the methods and means for implementing the Language Access Plan in all 58 counties, as well as coordinate with related advisory groups and Judicial Council staff on implementation efforts; and (2) a translation committee, which would oversee translation protocols for Judicial Council forms, written materials, and audiovisual tools.

Phase-In of Recommendations

To assist courts and all interested persons with understanding how the various recommendations contained in the Language Access Plan can be gradually phased in for implementation by the courts and the Judicial Council during the next five years (2015–2020), Appendix A (attached) groups all of the plan's recommendations into one of three categories:

- **PHASE 1:** These recommendations are urgent or should already be in place. Implementation of these recommendations should begin in year 1 (2015).
- **PHASE 2:** These recommendations are critical, but less urgent or may require completion of Phase 1 tasks. Implementation of these recommendations may begin immediately, where practicable, and in any event should begin by years 2–3 (2016–2017).
- **PHASE 3:** These recommendations are critical, but not urgent, or are complex and will require significant foundational steps, time, and resources to be completed by 2020. Implementation of these recommendations should begin immediately, where practicable, or immediately after the necessary foundational steps are in place.

Appendix A: Phase-In of Recommendations

PHASE 1: These recommendations are urgent or should already be in place. Implementation of these recommendations should begin in year 1 (2015).

#1 Language access needs identification. Courts will identify the language access needs for each LEP court user, including parties, witnesses, or other persons with a significant interest, at the earliest possible point of contact with the LEP person. The language needs will be clearly and consistently documented in the case management system and/or any other case record or file, as appropriate given a court's existing case information record system, and this capability should be included in any future system upgrades or system development. (Phase 1)

#2 Requests for language services. A court's provision or denial of language services must be tracked in the court's case information system, however appropriate given a court's capabilities. Where current tracking of provision or denial is not possible, courts must make reasonable efforts to modify or update their systems to capture relevant data as soon as feasible. (Phases 1, 2)

#3 Protocol for justice partners to communicate language needs. Courts should establish protocols by which justice partners can indicate to the court that an individual requires a spoken language interpreter at the earliest possible point of contact with the court system. (Phase 1)

#4 Mechanisms for LEP court users to self-identify. Courts will establish mechanisms that invite LEP persons to self-identify as needing language access services upon contact with any part of the court system (using, for example, "I speak" cards). In the absence of self-identification, judicial officers and court staff must proactively seek to ascertain a court user's language needs. (Phase 1)

#5 Information for court users about availability of language access services. Courts will inform court users about the availability of language access services at the earliest points of contact between court users and the court. The notice must include, where accurate and appropriate, that language access services are free. Courts should take into account that the need for language access services may occur earlier or later in the court process, so information about language services must be available throughout the duration of a case. Notices should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. Notice must be provided to the public, justice partners, legal services agencies, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. (Phase 1)

#6 Expansion of language services cost reporting. The Judicial Council and the courts will continue to expand and improve data collection on interpreter services, and expand language services cost reporting to include amounts spent on other language access services and tools

such as translations, interpreter or language services coordination, bilingual pay differential for staff, and multilingual signage or technologies. This information is critical in supporting funding requests as the courts expand language access services into civil cases. (Phase 1)

#8 Expansion of court interpreters to all civil proceedings. Qualified interpreters must be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all court proceedings, including civil proceedings as prioritized in Evidence Code section 756 (see Appendix H), and including Family Court Services mediation. (Phases 1 and 2)

#9 Provisional qualification requirements. Pending amendment of California Rules of Court, rule 2.893, when good cause exists, a noncertified or nonregistered court interpreter may be appointed in a court proceeding in any matter, civil or criminal, only after he or she is determined to be qualified by following the procedures for provisional qualification. These procedures are currently set forth, for criminal and juvenile delinquency matters, in rule 2.893 (and, for civil matters, will be set forth once the existing rule of court is amended). (See Recommendation 50, on training for judicial officers and court staff regarding the provisional qualification procedures, and Recommendation 70, on amending rule 2.893 to include civil cases.) (Phases 1 and 2)

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings. Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#12 Preference for in-person interpreters. The use of in-person, certified and registered court interpreters is preferred for court proceedings, but courts may consider the use of remote interpreting where it is appropriate for a particular event. Remote interpreting may only be used if it will allow LEP court users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings. (Phase 1)

#13 Remote interpreting in the courtroom. When using remote interpreting in the courtroom, the court must satisfy, to the extent feasible, the prerequisites, considerations, and guidelines for remote interpreting set forth in Appendix B. (Phase 1)

#14 Remote interpreting minimum technology requirements. The Implementation Task Force will establish minimum technology requirements for remote interpreting which will be updated on an ongoing basis and which will include minimum requirements for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. (Phase 1)

#15 Use of video for remote interpreting. Courts using remote interpreting should strive to provide video, used in conjunction with enhanced audio equipment, for courtroom interpretations, rather than relying on telephonic interpreting. (Phase 1)

#16 Pilot for video remote interpreting. The Judicial Council should conduct a pilot project, in alignment with the Judicial Branch’s Tactical Plan for Technology 2014–2016. This pilot should, to the extent possible, collect relevant data on: due process issues, participant satisfaction, whether remote interpreting increases the use of certified and registered interpreters as opposed to provisionally qualified interpreters, the effectiveness of a variety of available technologies (for both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation), and a cost-benefit analysis. The Judicial Council should make clear that this pilot project would not preclude or prevent any court from proceeding on its own to deploy remote interpreting, so long as it allows LEP court users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings. (Phase 1)

#18 Creation of multilingual standardized videos. The Judicial Council should continue to create multilingual standardized videos for high-volume case types that lend themselves to generalized, not localized, legal information, and provide them to courts in the state’s top eight languages and captioned in other languages. (Phase 1)

#19 Verifying credentials of interpreters. Effective January 2015, pursuant to Government Code section 68561(g) and (f), judicial officers, in conjunction with court administrative personnel, must ensure that the interpreters being appointed are qualified, properly represent their credentials on the record, and have filed with the court their interpreter oaths. (See Recommendation 50, which discusses training of judicial officers and court staff on these subjects.) (Phase 1)

#22 Avoiding conflicts of interest. Absent exigent circumstances, when appointing a noncertified, nonregistered interpreter, courts must not appoint persons with a conflict of interest or bias with respect to the matter. (Phase 1)

#23 Appointment of minors to interpret. Minors will not be appointed to interpret in courtroom proceedings nor court-ordered and court-operated activities. (Phase 1)

#25 Designation of language access office or representative. The court in each county will designate an office or person that serves as a language access resource for all court users, as well as court staff and judicial officers. This person or persons should be able to: describe all the services the court provides and what services it does not provide, access and disseminate all of the court’s multilingual written information as requested, and help LEP court users and court staff locate court language access resources. (Phase 1)

#26 Identification of critical points of contact. Courts should identify which points of contact are most critical for LEP court users, and, whenever possible, should place qualified bilingual staff at these locations. (See Recommendation 47, which discusses possible standards for the appropriate qualification level of bilingual staff at these locations.) (Phase 1)

#28 Recruitment of bilingual staff. Courts should strive to recruit bilingual staff fluent in the languages most common in that county. In order to increase the bilingual applicant pool, courts should conduct outreach to educational providers in the community, such as local high schools,

community colleges, and universities, to promote the career opportunities available to bilingual individuals in the courts. (Phase 1)

#34 Use of bilingual volunteers. Courts should consider the use of bilingual volunteers to provide language access services at points of contact other than court proceedings, where appropriate. Bilingual volunteers and interns must be properly trained and supervised. (Phase 1)

#36 Establishment of translation committee. The Judicial Council will create a translation committee to develop and formalize a translation protocol for Judicial Council translations of forms, written materials, and audiovisual tools. The committee should collaborate with interpreter organizations and courts to develop a legal glossary in all certified languages, taking into account regional differences, to maintain consistency in the translation of legal terms. The committee's responsibilities will also include identifying qualifications for translators, and the prioritization, coordination, and oversight of the translation of materials. The qualification of translators should include a requirement to have a court or legal specialization and be accredited by the American Translators Association (ATA), or to have been determined qualified to provide the translations based on experience, education, and references. Once the Judicial Council's translation protocol is established, individual courts should establish similar quality control and translation procedures for local forms, informational materials, recordings, and videos aimed at providing information to the public. Local court website information should use similarly qualified translators. Courts are encouraged to partner with local community organizations to accomplish this recommendation. (Phase 1)

#37 Statewide multilingual samples and templates. The Judicial Council staff will work with courts to provide samples and templates of multilingual information for court users that are applicable on a statewide basis and adaptable for local use. (Phase 1)

#38 Posting of translations on web. The Judicial Council's staff will post on the California Courts website written translations of forms and informational and educational materials for the public as they become available and will send notice to the courts of their availability so that courts can link to these postings from their own websites. (Phase 1)

#40 Translation of court orders. Courts will provide sight translation of court orders and should consider providing written translations of those orders to LEP persons when needed. At a minimum, courts should provide the translated version of the relevant Judicial Council form to help litigants compare their specific court order to the translated template form. (Phase 1)

#43 Standards for qualifications of interpreters. Courts, the Judicial Council, and the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) will ensure that all interpreters providing language access services to limited English proficient court users are qualified and competent. Existing standards for qualifications should remain in effect and will be reviewed regularly by the CIAP. (Phase 1)

#44 Online orientation for new interpreters. The online statewide orientation program will continue to be available to facilitate orientation training for new interpreters working in the courts. (Phase 1)

#45 Training for prospective interpreters. The Judicial Council and the courts should work with interpreter organizations and educational providers (including the California community college and state university systems) to examine ways to better prepare prospective interpreters to pass the credentialing examination. These efforts should include:

- Partnering to develop possible exam preparation courses and tests, and
- Creating internship and mentorship opportunities in the courts and in related legal settings (such as work with legal services providers or other legal professionals) to help train and prepare prospective interpreters in all legal areas.

(Phase 1)

#46 Training for interpreters on civil cases and remote interpreting. The Judicial Council, interpreter organizations, and educational groups should collaborate to create training programs for those who will be interpreting in civil cases and those who will be providing remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

#47 Language proficiency standards for bilingual staff. Courts must ensure that bilingual staff providing information to LEP court users are proficient in the languages in which they communicate. All staff designated as bilingual staff by courts must at a minimum meet standards corresponding to “intermediate mid” as defined under the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages guidelines. (See Appendix F.) The existing Oral Proficiency Exam available through the Judicial Council’s Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit may be used by courts to establish foreign-language proficiency of staff. Courts should not rely on self-evaluation by bilingual staff in determining their language proficiency. (Phase 1)

#48 Standards and online training for bilingual staff. Beyond the specified minimum, the Judicial Council staff will work with the courts to (a) identify standards of language proficiency for specific points of public contact within the courthouse, and (b) develop and implement an online training for bilingual staff. (Phase 1)

#50 Judicial branch training regarding Language Access Plan. Judicial officers, including temporary judges, court administrators, and court staff will receive training regarding the judicial branch’s language access policies and requirements as delineated in this Language Access Plan, as well as the policies and procedures of their individual courts. Courts should schedule additional training when policies are updated or changed. These trainings should include:

- Optimal methods for managing court proceedings involving interpreters, including an understanding of the mental exertion and concentration required for interpreting, the challenges of interpreter fatigue, the need to control rapid rates of speech and dialogue, and consideration of team interpreting where appropriate;

- The interpreter’s ethical duty to clarify issues during interpretation and to report impediments to performance;
- Required procedures for the appointment and use of a provisionally qualified interpreter and for an LEP court user’s waiver, if requested, of interpreter services;
- Legal requirements for establishing, on the record , an interpreter’s credentials;
- Available technologies and minimum technical and operational standards for providing remote interpreting; and
- Working with LEP court users in a culturally competent manner.

The staff of the Judicial Council will develop curricula for trainings, as well as resource manuals that address all training components, and distribute them to all courts for adaptation to local needs. (Phase 1)

#52 Benchcards on language access. Judicial Council staff should develop bench cards that summarize salient language access policies and procedures and available resources to assist bench officers in addressing language issues that arise in the courtroom, including policies related to remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

#56 Advocacy for sufficient funding. The judicial branch will advocate for sufficient funding to provide comprehensive language access services. The funding requests should reflect the incremental phasing-in of the Language Access Plan, and should seek to ensure that requests do not jeopardize funding for other court services or operations. (Phase 1)

#57 Use of data for funding requests. Funding requests for comprehensive language access services should be premised on the best available data that identifies the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of this Language Access Plan. This may include information being gathered in connection with the recent Judicial Council decision to expand the use of Program 45.45 funds for civil cases where parties are indigent; information being gathered for the 2015 Language Need and Interpreter Use Report; and information that can be extrapolated from the Resource Assessment Study (which looks at court staff workload), as well as other court records (e.g., self-help center records regarding LEP court users). (Phase 1)

#58 Pursuit by the Judicial Council of other funding opportunities. Judicial Council staff will pursue appropriate funding opportunities from federal, state, or nonprofit entities such as the National Center for State Courts, which are particularly suitable for one-time projects, for example, translation of documents or production of videos. (Phase 1)

#59 Pursuit by courts of other funding opportunities. Courts should pursue appropriate funding opportunities at the national, state, or local level to support the provision of language access services. Courts should seek, for example, one-time or ongoing grants from public interest foundations, state or local bar associations, federal, state, or local governments, and others. (Phase 1)

#60 Language Access Implementation Task Force. The Judicial Council will create a Language Access Implementation Task Force (name TBD) to develop an implementation plan for

presentation to the council. The Implementation Task Force membership should include representatives of the key stakeholders in the provision of language access services in the courts, including, but not limited to, judicial officers, court administrators, court interpreters, legal services providers, and attorneys that commonly work with LEP court users. As part of its charge, the task force will identify the costs associated with implementing the LAP recommendations. The Implementation Task Force will coordinate with related advisory groups and Judicial Council staff on implementation, and will have the flexibility to monitor and adjust implementation plans based on feasibility and available resources. (Phase 1)

#61 Compliance and monitoring system. The Implementation Task Force will establish the necessary systems for monitoring compliance with this Language Access Plan. This will include oversight of the plan's effects on language access statewide and at the individual court level, and assessing the need for ongoing adjustments and improvements to the plan. (Phase 1)

#62 Single complaint form. The Implementation Task Force will develop a single form, available statewide, on which to register a complaint about the provision of, or the failure to provide, language access. This form should be as simple, streamlined, and user-friendly as possible. The form will be available in both hard copy at the courthouse and online, and will be capable of being completed electronically or downloaded for printing and completion in writing. The complaints will also serve as a mechanism to monitor concerns related to language access at the local or statewide level. The form should be used as part of multiple processes identified in the following recommendations of this plan. (Phase 1)

#63 Complaints at local level regarding language access services. Individual courts will develop a process by which LEP court users, their advocates and attorneys, or other interested persons may file a complaint about the court's provision of, or failure to provide, appropriate language access services, including issues related to locally produced translations. Local courts may choose to model their local procedures after those developed as part of the implementation process. Complaints must be filed with the court at issue and reported to the Judicial Council to assist in the ongoing monitoring of the overall implementation and success of the Language Access Plan. (Phase 1)

#66 Statewide repository of language access resources. The Judicial Council should create a statewide repository of language access resources, whether existing or to be developed, that includes translated materials, audiovisual tools, and other materials identified in this plan in order to assist courts in efforts to expand language access. (Phase 1)

#67 Adoption of plan by the California Courts of Appeal and California Supreme Court. The California Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of California should discuss and adopt applicable parts of this Language Access Plan with necessary modifications. (Phase 1)

#69 Procedures and guidelines for good cause. The Judicial Council should establish procedures and guidelines for determining "good cause" to appoint non-credentialed court interpreters in civil matters. (Phase 1)

#70 Amend rule of court for appointment of interpreters in civil proceedings. The Judicial Council should amend rule of court 2.893 to address the appointment of non-credentialed interpreters in civil proceedings. (Phase 1)

#75 Policy regarding waiver of interpreter. The Implementation Task Force will develop a policy addressing an LEP court user's request of a waiver of the services of an interpreter. The policy will identify standards to ensure that any waiver is knowing, intelligent, and voluntary; is made after the person has consulted with counsel; and is approved by the appropriate judicial officer, exercising his or her discretion. The policy will address any other factors necessary to ensure the waiver is appropriate, including: determining whether an interpreter is necessary to ensure the waiver is made knowingly; ensuring that the waiver is entered on the record, or in writing if there is no official record of the proceedings; and requiring that a party may request at any time, or the court may make on its own motion, an order vacating the waiver and appointing an interpreter for all further proceedings. The policy shall reflect the expectation that waivers will rarely be invoked in light of access to free interpreter services and the Implementation Task Force will track waiver usage to assist in identifying any necessary changes to policy. (Phase 1)

PHASE 2: These recommendations are critical, but less urgent or may require completion of Phase 1 tasks. Implementation of these recommendations may begin immediately, where practicable, and in any event should begin by years 2–3 (2016–2017).

#2 Requests for language services. A court's provision or denial of language services must be tracked in the court's case information system, however appropriate given a court's capabilities. Where current tracking of provision or denial is not possible, courts must make reasonable efforts to modify or update their systems to capture relevant data as soon as feasible. (Phases 1, 2)

#7 Review of other data beyond the U.S. Census. The Judicial Council and the courts should collect data in order to anticipate the numbers and languages of likely LEP court users. Whenever data is collected, including for these purposes, the courts and the Judicial Council should look at other sources of data beyond the U.S. Census, such as school systems, health departments, county social services, and local community-based agencies. (Phase 2)

#8 Expansion of court interpreters to all civil proceedings. Qualified interpreters must be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all court proceedings, including civil proceedings as prioritized in Evidence Code section 756 (see Appendix H), and including Family Court Services mediation. (Phases 1 and 2)

#9 Provisional qualification requirements. Pending amendment of California Rules of Court, rule 2.893, when good cause exists, a noncertified or nonregistered court interpreter may be appointed in a court proceeding in any matter, civil or criminal, only after he or she is determined to be qualified by following the procedures for provisional qualification. These

procedures are currently set forth, for criminal and juvenile delinquency matters, in rule 2.893 (and, for civil matters, will be set forth once the existing rule of court is amended). (See Recommendation 50, on training for judicial officers and court staff regarding the provisional qualification procedures, and Recommendation 70, on amending rule 2.893 to include civil cases.) (Phases 1 and 2)

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings.

Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#11 Consideration of language accessibility of service providers in making court orders. An LEP individual should not be ordered to participate in a court-ordered program if that program does not provide appropriate language accessible services. If a judicial officer does not order participation in services due to the program's lack of language capacity, the court should order the litigant to participate in an appropriate alternative program that provides language access services for the LEP court user. In making its findings and orders, the court should inquire if the program provides language access services to ensure the LEP court user's ability to meet the requirements of the court. (Phase 2)

#17 Pilot for central pool of remote interpreters. In order to maximize the use and availability of California's highly skilled certified and registered interpreters, the Judicial Council should consider creating a pilot program through which certified and registered interpreters would be available to all courts on a short-notice basis to provide remote interpreting services. (Phase 2)

#20 Expansion of regional coordination system. The Judicial Council should expand the existing formal regional coordination system to improve efficiencies in interpreter scheduling for court proceedings and cross-assignments between courts throughout the state. (See Recommendation 30, addressing coordination for bilingual staff and interpreters for non-courtroom events.) (Phase 2)

#21 Methods for calendaring and coordination of court interpreters. Courts should continue to develop methods for using interpreters more efficiently and effectively, including but not limited to calendar coordination. Courts should develop these systems in a way that does not have a chilling effect on LEP court users' access to court services. (Phase 2)

#24 Appointment of bilingual staff. Absent exigent circumstances, courts should avoid appointing bilingual court staff to interpret in courtroom proceedings; if the court does appoint staff, he or she must meet all of the provisional qualification requirements. (Phase 2)

#27 Provision of language access tools to court personnel. All court staff who engage with the public will have access to language assistance tools, such as translated materials and resources, multi-language glossaries and "I speak" cards, to determine a court user's native language,

direct him or her to the designated location for language services, and/or provide the LEP individual with brochures, instructions, or other information in the appropriate language. (Phase 2)

#29 Development of protocols for where bilingual staff are not available. Courts will develop written protocols or procedures to ensure LEP court users obtain adequate language access services where bilingual staff are not available. For example, the court’s interpreter coordinator could be on call to identify which interpreters or staff are available and appropriate to provide services in the clerk’s office or self-help center. Additionally, the use of remote technologies such as telephone access to bilingual staff persons in another location or remote interpreting could be instituted. (Phase 2)

#30 Policies that promote sharing of bilingual staff and interpreters among courts. The Judicial Council should consider adopting policies that promote sharing of bilingual staff and certified and registered court interpreters among courts, using remote technologies, for language assistance outside of court proceedings. (Phase 2)

#31 Pilot for remote assistance at counters and in self-help centers. The courts and the Judicial Council should consider a pilot to implement the use of remote interpreter services for counter help and at self-help centers, incorporating different solutions, including court-paid cloud-based fee-for-service models or a court/centralized bank of bilingual professionals. (Phase 2)

#32 Pilot for remote assistance for workshops. The courts should consider a pilot to implement inter-court, remote attendance at workshops, trainings, or “information nights” conducted in non-English languages using a variety of equipment, including telephone, video-conferencing (WebEx, Skype), or other technologies. (Phase 2)

#33 Qualifications of court-appointed professionals. In matters with LEP court users, courts must determine that court-appointed professionals, such as psychologists, mediators, and guardians, can provide linguistically accessible services before ordering or referring LEP court users to those professionals. Where no such language capability exists, courts should make reasonable efforts to identify or enter into contracts with providers able to offer such language capabilities, either as bilingual professionals who can provide the service directly in another language or via qualified interpreters. (Phase 2)

#39 Signage throughout courthouse. The staff of the Judicial Council should assist courts by providing plain-language translations of the most common and relevant signs likely to be used in a courthouse, and provide guidance on the use of internationally recognized icons, symbols, and displays to limit the need for text and, therefore, translation. Where more localized signage is required, courts should have all public signs in English and translated in up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 2)

#41 Accessible courthouses. The Judicial Council, partnering with courts, should ensure that new courthouse construction efforts, as well as redesign of existing courthouse space, are undertaken with consideration for making courthouses more easily navigable by all LEP persons. (Phase 2)

#42 Wayfinding strategies. The Judicial Council's staff will provide information to courts interested in better wayfinding strategies, multilingual (static and dynamic) signage, and other design strategies that focus on assisting LEP court users. (Phase 2)

#49 Recruitment strategies for language access providers. The Judicial Council staff will work with educational providers, community-based organizations, and interpreter organizations to identify recruitment strategies, including consideration of market conditions, to encourage bilingual individuals to pursue the interpreting profession or employment opportunities in the courts as bilingual staff. (Phase 2)

#51 Language access resources on intranet. Information on local and statewide language access resources, training and educational components identified throughout this plan, glossaries, signage, and other tools for providing language access should be readily available to all court staff through individual courts' intranets. (Phases 2 and 3)

#64 Complaints regarding court interpreters. The Judicial Council, together with stakeholders, will develop a process by which the quality and accuracy of an interpreter's skills and adherence to ethical requirements can be reviewed. This process will allow for appropriate remedial action, where required, to ensure certified and registered interpreters meet all qualification standards. Development of the process should include determination of whether California Rule of Court 2.891 (regarding periodic review of court interpreter skills and professional conduct) should be amended, repealed, or remain in place. Once the review process is created, information regarding how it can be initiated must be clearly communicated to court staff, judicial officers, attorneys, and in plain language to court users (e.g., LEP persons and justice partners). (Phase 2)

#68 Implementation Task Force to evaluate need for updates to rules and statutes. To ensure ongoing and effective implementation of the LAP, the Implementation Task Force will evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the need for new statutes or rules or modifications of existing rules and statutes. (Phases 2 and 3)

#71 Legislation to delete exception for small claims proceedings. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Government Code section 68560.5(a) to include small claims proceedings in the definition of court proceedings for which qualified interpreters must be provided. (Phase 2)

#72 Legislation to require credentialed interpreters for small claims. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Code of Civil Procedure section 116.550 dealing with small

claims actions to reflect that interpreters in small claims cases should, as with other matters, be certified or registered, or provisionally qualified where a credentialed interpreter is not available. (Phase 2)

#73 Updating of interpreter-related forms. The Judicial Council should update the interpreter-related court forms (INT-100-INFO, INT-110, INT-120, and INT-200) as necessary to be consistent with this plan. (Phase 2)

#74 Evaluation of Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act. The Implementation Task Force should evaluate existing law, including a study of any negative impacts of the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act on the provision of appropriate language access services. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, whether any modifications should be proposed for existing requirements and limitations on hiring independent contractors beyond a specified number of days. (Phase 2)

PHASE 3: These recommendations are critical, but not urgent, or are complex and will require significant foundational steps, time, and resources to be completed by 2020. Implementation of these recommendations should begin immediately, where practicable, or immediately after the necessary foundational steps are in place.

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings. Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#35 Pilot programs for language access kiosks. As an alternative for traditional information dissemination, the Judicial Council should consider creating pilot programs to implement the use of language access kiosks in lobbies or other public waiting areas to provide a variety of information electronically, such as on a computer or tablet platform. This information should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 3)

#51 Language access resources on intranet. Information on local and statewide language access resources, training and educational components identified throughout this plan, glossaries, signage, and other tools for providing language access should be readily available to all court staff through individual courts' intranets. (Phases 2 and 3)

#53 Partnerships to disseminate information. Courts should strengthen existing relationships and create new relationships with local community-based organizations, including social services providers, legal services organizations, government agencies, and minority bar

associations to gather feedback to improve court services for LEP court users and disseminate court information and education throughout the community. (Phase 3)

#54 Multilingual audio or video recordings to inform public. To maximize both access and efficiency, multilingual audio and/or video recordings should be used as part of the outreach efforts by courts to provide important general information and answers to frequently asked questions. (Phase 3)

#55 Collaboration with media. Courts should collaborate with local media and leverage the resources of media outlets, including ethnic media that communicate with their consumers in their language, as a means of disseminating information throughout the community about language access services, the court process, and available court resources. (Phase 3)

#65 Complaints regarding statewide translations. The translation committee (as described in Recommendation 36), in consultation with the Implementation Task Force, will develop a process to address complaints about the quality of Judicial Council–approved translations, including translation of Judicial Council forms, the California Courts Online Self-Help Center, and other Judicial Council–issued publications and information. (Phase 3)

#68 Implementation Task Force to evaluate need for updates to rules and statutes. To ensure ongoing and effective implementation of the LAP, the Implementation Task Force will evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the need for new statutes or rules or modifications of existing rules and statutes. (Phases 2 and 3)

CALIFORNIA JUDICIAL BRANCH

Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts

**Adopted by the Judicial Council
January 22, 2015**

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Letter from the Chief Justice of California

California’s incredible diversity is one of its greatest assets—it also presents great challenges—but challenges as significant as these also provide opportunities to thoughtfully consider the issues and craft an effective plan to address them.

The numbers tell the story of the access challenges facing Californians: approximately 40 percent of us speak a non-English language at home; there are more than 200 languages and dialects spoken; roughly 20 percent of us (nearly 7 million) have English language limitations.

To address this enormous linguistic challenge for our court system, the Joint Working Group for California’s Language Access Plan’s charge is to develop a comprehensive, statewide language access plan that will provide recommendations, guidance, and a consistent statewide approach to ensure language access for all of California’s limited English proficient (LEP) court users.

The Working Group is addressing one of my highest priorities for the judicial branch by looking at how we can provide full, meaningful, fair, and equal access to justice for all Californians. If individuals cannot understand what is happening in court, how to fill out legal forms, or how to find their way around the courthouse, there is no meaningful access. We need to identify the language barriers that litigants face every day in our courts and how we can better address those needs.

In August 2013, I announced my vision for improving access to justice for Californians, “Access 3D.” Access to our justice system must be examined through a framework that looks at equal access, physical access, and remote access. We ensure physical access by keeping courthouses and courtrooms open, well-maintained and accessible to persons with disabilities; we ensure remote access by providing online resources and electronic access to our court system; and we ensure equal access by making judicial proceedings and all related court contacts available and comprehensible to all. Efforts to enhance language access for LEP court users are a critical component of this Access 3D framework.

Access to the courts for all LEP individuals is critical not just to guarantee access to justice in our state, but to ensure the legitimacy of our system of justice and the trust and confidence of Californians in our court system.

Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye
Chief Justice of California

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The Joint Working Group for California’s Language Access Plan affirms that equal access to justice for all is the cornerstone of our judicial process.

I. Introduction

Access to the courts for all Californians is critical to ensure the legitimacy of our system of justice and the trust and confidence of Californians in our courts. Without meaningful language access, Californians who speak limited English are effectively denied access to the very laws created to protect them.

The Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts (“Language Access Plan”) is a foundational component of the judicial branch’s commitment to addressing language access. It is the product of more than a year of research and policy development, and the gathering of critical input from stakeholders and justice partners. The plan sets forth (1) an extensive discussion of the multifaceted issues related to the expansion of language access, and (2) a comprehensive set of goals and recommendations delineating a consistent yet flexible statewide approach to the provision of language access, at no cost to court users.

The 75 recommendations in the plan enumerate the policies and operational changes that will need to take place to make comprehensive language access a reality in the California courts. In order to turn these recommendations and policies into a practical roadmap for courts, the plan recommends the immediate formation of a Language Access Implementation Task Force (name TBD, but referred to herein as “Implementation Task Force”). The Implementation Task Force

would develop and recommend the methods and means for fully—and realistically—implementing the Language Access Plan in all 58 counties, and would coordinate with related advisory groups and Judicial Council Staff on implementation efforts, as appropriate. The Implementation Task Force would also make best estimates as to the costs of implementation and the feasibility of the phasing process based upon resources available. The implementation process would include the monitoring and updating of the plan, in particular, as the trial courts provide information, feedback, suggestions and innovative solutions.

a. Fundamental Issues for the Judicial Branch

California is home to the most diverse population in the country. There are approximately 7 million limited English proficient (LEP) residents and potential court users speaking more than 200 languages and dispersed over a vast geographic area. The most commonly spoken languages vary widely both within and among counties; indigenous languages¹ have become more common and also more visible, particularly in rural areas; and the influx of new immigrants brings with it emerging languages² throughout the state. This richly diverse and dynamic population is one of our greatest assets, and a significant driver of the state’s

¹ Throughout this language access plan, the term “indigenous languages” is used for minority languages that are native to a region and spoken by indigenous peoples. Many of these languages have limited or no written components. These indigenous languages present unique language access challenges because it is often difficult to find interpreters and language access providers who are able to speak both the indigenous language and English with enough proficiency for meaningful communication. Therefore, it is often necessary to provide relay interpreting, where the first interpreter renders the indigenous language into a more common foreign language (e.g., from one form of Mixteco to Spanish) and another interprets from the more common language to English (in our example, Spanish to English).

² “Emerging languages” are those that are spoken by newly arrived immigrants who have not yet established themselves in significant enough numbers or for long enough periods of time to be as visible to service providers, census trackers, or other data collectors. They are varied and ever changing, as migration patterns shift.

economic and social growth and progress. It also means that the state's institutions, including the judicial branch, must continually adapt to meet the needs of its constituents.

The diversity of California's population is matched by the diversity among, and within, its 58 counties. California has urban counties and rural counties, large and small, and counties with big cities, small towns, and scarcely populated land each with its own superior court. Alpine County has 2 judges and 1 courthouse location, with no staff interpreters, and a total population of about 1,200. Los Angeles County, by contrast, has 477 authorized judges, 91 commissioners, and 26 referees.³ The Los Angeles court employs over 300 staff interpreters spread among its 600 courtrooms in 38 courthouses; they serve 10 million residents, spread across 4,800 square miles. In addition to the vast county differences, the state is split into four regions for purposes of collective bargaining with the interpreters' union. This often results in variations in agreed-upon work rules and conditions for employee interpreters.

To meet the needs and demands created by this diversity, the California trial courts have a long history of developing creative solutions to address language access needs, particularly in the provision of highly-trained certified and registered court interpreters. Currently there are more than 1,800 of these interpreters, providing 215,000 interpreter service days annually at a cost of over \$92 million each year.⁴ In addition, courts have employed hundreds of highly skilled bilingual employees, utilized dozens of bilingual JusticeCorps volunteers in several courthouses,

³ Data as of June 2013.

⁴ Total statewide court interpreter expenditures incurred during 2013–2014 that are eligible to be reimbursed from the Trial Court Trust Fund (TCTF) Program 45.45 (court interpreter) amounts to \$92,471,280.

and provided self-help assistance and other informational court services in multiple languages.⁵ Individual courts have also developed their own innovative programs to increase the provision of services in languages other than English.⁶ Many court forms have been translated, multilingual informational videos created, and collaborations with local community organizations formed to address language and cultural barriers.

While the efforts made to date have been substantial, many Californians still face significant obstacles to meaningful access to our justice system. The California courts also face unique challenges every day, particularly in courtrooms with high volume calendars in which the vast majority of litigants are self-represented (such as traffic, family law, and, of course, small claims, where parties must represent themselves). Courts must confront these challenges with limited resources, having endured severe budget cuts during the past several years that have crippled their ability to maintain adequate levels of service. Although some funding has been restored to the courts, the branch is not funded to the levels it was just a few years ago, much less to the level it must be to be able to provide all the services Californians need and expect in the resolution of their legal disputes.

⁵ See, for example, the California Courts Online Self-Help Center in English at www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm and in Spanish at www.sucorte.ca.gov; the JusticeCorps program detailed at www.courts.ca.gov/justicecorps.htm.

⁶ Depending on local resources and regional bargaining agreements, court interpreters in California currently provide a variety of interpreter services for LEP court users, including simultaneous or consecutive interpretation of court proceedings, court-ordered programs for which an interpreter is required such as court-ordered: psychiatric evaluations; interviews with defendants and witnesses; sight translation of court documents; probate investigations; mediations sessions and child-custody evaluations, or other interpreter services as may be required by the court. See also the University of California Hastings College of the Law's study on *Enhancing Language Access Services for LEP Court Users* (2013), found at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jc-20130426-info3.pdf, discussing the various approaches by local courts throughout the state to providing language access.

While the provision of comprehensive language access across our system of justice will undoubtedly require additional resources and funding, the branch also understands that fundamental and systemic changes in our approach to language access, at the statewide and local levels, are both necessary and feasible. The Chief Justice recognized that developing a comprehensive statewide language access plan was a critical first step in addressing the needs of the state's LEP population in a more systematic fashion. In June 2013, the Chief Justice appointed a Joint Working Group to develop this California courts' Language Access Plan, with the intent that it set forth useable standards for the provision of language access services across the superior courts statewide, while allowing local courts to retain control over the allocation of their internal resources.

This plan acknowledges, through some of the recommendations, that many beneficial practices are already in place in courts around the state. These successful practices are being included as recommendations in this plan to show appreciation for emerging best practices and to highlight effective approaches that local trial courts have taken, on their own, to promote language accessibility. The intent of these recommendations is to provide, as much as possible, a blueprint for trial courts to follow and use as guidance as they expand language access to the public they serve. The plan also recommends that the California Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court of California discuss and adopt applicable parts of the plan with any necessary modifications. This strategic plan is not, however, an operational or implementation plan. If this plan is approved, implementation, planning and oversight will begin in 2015.

Fundamental to California's Language Access Plan is the principle that the plan's implementation will be adequately funded so the expansion of language access services will take place without impairing other court services. The Language Access Plan recognizes that where resources are limited, where additional funding will take time to secure, or where implementing one recommendation can only occur after another is completed, the plan needs to provide for a phasing-in of its recommendations over time. The Implementation Task Force will be responsible for calculating implementation costs, creating implementation recommendations for the Judicial Council, and adjusting implementation based on feasibility assessments over time including the financial resources available.

In addition, is the intent of this plan that all of its recommendations be applied consistently across all 58 trial courts. To the extent that provisions in local bargaining agreements are in conflict with any recommendations contained in this plan, it is recommended that local agreements be modified or renegotiated as soon as practicable to be consistent with plan recommendations and to ensure that, at a general level, courts provide language access services for LEP persons that are consistent statewide. However, the drafters of the plan recognize that differences in local demographics, court operations and individual memoranda of understanding with court employees may constrain individual courts' abilities to fully implement certain of the plan's recommendations on the timeline proposed.

b. Summary of the Plan

California's Language Access Plan proposes a comprehensive and systematic approach to expand and enhance language access in the California courts. While the plan allows for a large degree of flexibility for the state's diverse courts and communities, it also provides baseline standards to ensure statewide consistency with federal and state law⁷ so that all Californians can expect language access services regardless of where they live within the state's borders.⁸

The Language Access Plan includes an assessment and prioritization of all of the points of contact between LEP court users and the courts. In this way, a greater level of skill and resources can be targeted at the most complex and important events, such as hearings, trials, and other court proceedings, while more flexible services can be provided at other points of contact, such as self-help centers and the clerk's office. The plan also considers and addresses points of contact before LEP court users even arrive at the courthouse, since they may be discouraged from accessing the judicial system if they perceive, accurately or not, that their

⁷ Relevant authority includes Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations (42 U.S.C. section 2000d et seq; 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subpart C), the California Constitution, California Evidence Code section 756 (eff. 01/01/15), and California Government Code sections 68092.1 (eff. 01/01/15; see Appendix H for new statutes), 68560(e), and 7290 et seq. The plan also addresses issues identified by the U.S. Department of Justice in its investigation of the Judicial Council for compliance with Title VI regarding the provision of language access services in the California state courts.

⁸ The legal requirements relating to access for deaf or hard of hearing court users are governed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other relevant statutes. However, deaf or hard of hearing court users and their interpreters should be considered as part of any language access plan implementation whenever appropriate, by, for example, including deaf or hard of hearing court users and their interpreters on "I Speak" cards or in centralized pilots. Provision of standards related to language access for deaf or hard of hearing court users will not be included in this plan since courts are already legally mandated to provide deaf or hard of hearing court users with disability and related language access (see ADA and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). Where access may not be provided to deaf or hard of hearing court users under the ADA, the courts will provide access as part of their compliance with this plan.

language needs will not be met. Targeting resource allocation to the most critical points of contact will also require improved data collection on the languages spoken in each county.

The plan also identifies and advocates for the use of cost-effective methods to enhance language access throughout the courthouse, such as multilingual self-help services and brochures, multilingual information on court websites (both spoken and written), remote language services for interactions with court staff, and translated court signage and legal forms. A significant focus is placed on the appropriate qualification and utilization of a variety of language access providers, from court interpreters to bilingual employees to trained volunteers, at the various points of contact that LEP court users have with our courts.

Additionally, the plan identifies the kinds of training needed for judicial officers, court administrators, and court staff on how to understand and address the needs of LEP court users, including education in cultural competence, the optimal methods of managing a court proceeding in which interpreting services are being provided, the provision of language access services throughout the court system, and state and local language access policies. Other subjects addressed in the plan include the recruitment and training of bilingual staff and interpreters, and the formation of partnerships with community organizations serving LEP populations.

The branch is constantly aware of the need to build in efficiencies and cost savings. The plan therefore recommends a strategy for phasing in the expansion of spoken language interpreter

services in all court matters consistent with new [Evidence Code section 756](#), where existing resources prohibit immediate expansion to all cases; and it recommends the creation of scheduling protocols to ensure the most efficient use of interpreters. The plan also proposes the thoughtful and responsible deployment of technological solutions, such as appropriate use of video remote technology and multilingual audiovisual tools, which provide language access while ensuring due process and high quality language services. The recommendations in the plan also set the framework for identifying the additional funding that will be needed to enable the courts to meet the increased demand on court resources that will arise from the branch's commitment to language access without sacrificing any other court services.

c. Timeline of Recommendations

This strategic plan outlines three phases of implementation. This is proposed because some of the recommendations in this Language Access Plan can be implemented immediately; others may require the creation of efficiencies in existing court operations and the more effective deployment of current resources. Other recommendations require changes in legislation and rules of court, or additional funding for the judicial branch. The Implementation Task Force will have the flexibility to adjust phasing of the recommendations based upon its on-going review and monitoring of the progress of implementation and available resources.

To assist courts and all interested persons in understanding how the various recommendations contained in the Language Access Plan can be gradually phased in for implementation by the courts and the Judicial Council during the next five years (2015–2020), Appendix A groups all of the plan's recommendations into one of three phases.

- **PHASE 1:** These recommendations are urgent or should already be in place. Implementation of these recommendations should begin in year 1 (2015).
- **PHASE 2:** These recommendations are critical, but less urgent or may require completion of Phase 1 tasks. Implementation of these recommendations may begin immediately, where practicable, and in any event should begin by years 2–3 (2016–2017).
- **PHASE 3:** These recommendations are critical, but not urgent, or are complex and will require significant foundational steps, time, and resources to be completed by 2020. Implementation of these recommendations should begin immediately, where practicable, or immediately after the necessary foundational steps are in place.

Regardless of which phase a recommendation falls under, every recommendation in this plan should be put in place as soon as the resources can be secured and the necessary actions are taken for implementation. The provision of meaningful language access to all Californians who need it, and equal access to justice, are and should be considered a core court function. Courts should continue to provide all existing language access services even if the particular service appears in a later phase of this plan. Similarly, the proposed phase-in must allow for flexibility if the Implementation Task Force determines that different phasing is more appropriate to achieve the goal of comprehensive language access.

d. The Planning Process

The Joint Working Group’s effort to develop a comprehensive statewide language access plan began with the review of a large body of information, including language access plans of other states, the American Bar Association (ABA) Standards for Language Access in Courts, the California Federation of Interpreter’s position paper on video remote interpreting, prior reports on language access needs and solutions in California courts, and the National Center for State Courts’ Call to Action. Additional reports and materials were received over the course of the planning process. A complete list of the background information considered and utilized by the working group can be found in Appendix G. The working group also held three in-person meetings and numerous conference calls to debate ideas.

To complete the information-gathering process, the working group held meetings with court leaders and other stakeholders, held public hearings, and invited and received both written and oral public comment. This input included:

- Listening sessions with language access stakeholders, namely:
 - Independent interpreter organizations;
 - Legal services providers representing various communities throughout the state;
 - The California Federation of Interpreters; and
 - Presiding judges and court executive officers.
- Three public hearings (in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento) with comments from 29 panelists providing input from local, statewide, national, health-care, court, education, and legislative perspectives. Audio for the three hearings was broadcast on

the web and included closed captioning in English and Spanish. American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken language interpreters were provided for audience members and persons providing oral comment.

Panelists included:

- Court executive officers representing the diversity of needs and challenges faced by different courts throughout the state;
- Legal services organizations and community advocates representing client populations in large urban areas such as Los Angeles, in Asian-American Pacific Islander and Latino communities throughout California, and in rural communities with significant numbers of indigenous language speakers;
- The president of the California State Bar, Assembly Member Ed Chau, and a representative from the California Department of Education;
- The president and representatives of the largest organization representing court interpreters in California, the California Federation of Interpreters (CFI); and
- A national expert from the National Center for State Courts, the director of the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts, and the Senior Director of National Diversity and Inclusion for Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc.

During the public comment portion of the public hearings the working group heard extensive oral comments and received a significant body of written comments and prepared statements,

including comments from LEP court users (some of whom spoke in their primary languages, with their comments interpreted into English), court interpreters, community representatives, legal services providers, and education providers.⁹

Additionally, there was a public comment period of 60 days following Judicial Council's approval and release of the draft of the Language Access Plan.

The Joint Working Group would like to thank all commentators and also acknowledge that the U.S. Department of Justice, in conjunction with its investigation, has been extremely supportive and helpful throughout the working group's planning process as it worked to develop the best possible Language Access Plan for the California courts.

Key themes from stakeholder input:

Stakeholders provided a wealth of information during the listening sessions and in the public hearing and comment process. In preparing this Language Access Plan, the Joint Working Group has studied and considered this thoughtful and invaluable information at length. Although the range of topics covered, the insights shared, and the experiences relayed were extensive, some salient themes surfaced throughout the planning process:

- Although California's judicial branch is committed to providing full, meaningful, fair, and equal access to justice for all Californians, including limited English proficient litigants,

⁹ See www.courts.ca.gov/LAP.htm for links to written public comments and prepared testimonies for the three public hearings.

much remains to be done, especially in the civil arena, to ensure all court users have meaningful access to the state's courts.

- Any efforts to improve the provision of language access services must include a more comprehensive mechanism for collecting data on LEP communities and their potential need for court services. Traditional sources of demographic data underestimate the existing numbers of LEP residents in the state, in particular with regard to linguistically isolated communities, migrant workers, and speakers of indigenous languages. Similarly, these data sources do not adequately track emerging languages.
- LEP speakers who need to use the judicial system for a variety of civil issues—from child custody to restraining orders to evictions—are unable to meaningfully access court processes because of language barriers. In critical proceedings such as hearings and trials, LEP court users are often forced to resort to family members or friends to communicate with the court. These untrained interpreters are rarely equipped to relay the court's communication accurately and completely to the LEP litigant, and vice versa. Failure to ensure proper communication can lead to the loss by LEP court users of important legal rights, an inability to access remedies, or basic misunderstandings and confusion.
- Language access must be provided at all critical or significant points of contact that LEP persons have with the court system. LEP parties are often unable to handle even the very first steps in seeking legal recourse, such as knowing what remedies or legal protections may be available and where to seek them out, knowing what legal procedures to follow, and understanding how to fill out court forms as well as how and

where to file them. Language access must start before an LEP court user reaches the courthouse doors; it must begin with community outreach and education efforts, web-based access, and the utilization of ethnic media outlets to educate the public. And it must then be available upon entering the courthouse and throughout all components of court services, such as self-help centers, alternative dispute resolution services, and the clerks' counters.

- Projections about the cost of expanding language access throughout all court proceedings and points of contact vary widely but are by and large unknown. There are questions about whether the existing pool of court interpreters who are certified or registered by the Judicial Council and available to work throughout the state is sufficient to meet the possible demand as services are expanded, with differing views regarding the existing capacity. Although it is difficult at this stage to estimate the cost of expanded access when including all attendant costs, from technology to interpreter deployment to translation to training and qualification of staff to improved courthouse signage, information can and must be collected to make rational projections.
- Technologies such as video remote interpreting (VRI), telephonic interpretation, web-based access, multilingual audiovisual tools, and others have an important role to play in the statewide provision of language access. However, courts must exercise care to ensure that the use of technology is appropriate for the setting involved, that safeguards are in place for ensuring access without deprivation of due process rights, and that high quality is maintained.

- The California judicial branch has seen a drastic reduction in funding in recent years. Although some funding has been restored, due to various factors this has not resulted in any net increase in the total funding for the branch. Consequently, courts throughout the state are still struggling to provide the most basic level of service to their communities. Expansion of language access services, though supported by all stakeholders, poses fiscal demands that must be satisfied by efficiencies in the provision of language services and, most importantly, by additional funding appropriated for that purpose and not by shifting already scarce resources from other court services.
- Any effort to ensure meaningful language access to the court system for all Californians must include partnerships with stakeholders. These stakeholders include: community-based providers like social services organizations, domestic violence advocates, mental health providers, and substance abuse treatment programs; justice partners such as legal services organizations, court interpreter organizations, district attorneys, public defenders, law enforcement, jails, probation departments, and administrative agencies; and other language access experts.
- The judicial branch should become more proactive in recruiting potential interpreters at the earliest stages of their education, particularly in high schools and community colleges. Courts should create partnerships with educational providers to develop a pipeline of potential interpreters and bilingual court employees.
- There is a critical need for training of judicial officers, court staff, and security personnel in (1) identifying and addressing the needs of court users at all points of contact with the court, (2) understanding distinct characteristics of the various ethnic communities that

can ensure respectful treatment of LEP court users, (3) ensuring that interpreters are, in fact, certified or are properly provisionally qualified, and (4) conducting courtroom proceedings in a manner that facilitates the maximum quality of interpretation.

e. Relevant Judicial Branch Goals

California’s Language Access Plan effort supports Goal 1 of the Judicial Council’s most recent strategic plan—Access, Fairness, and Diversity—which sets forth that:

- All persons will have equal access to the courts and court proceedings and programs;
- Court procedures will be fair and understandable to court users; and
- Members of the judicial branch community will strive to understand and be responsive to the needs of court users from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The Language Access Plan also aligns with the most recent operational plan for the judicial branch, which identifies additional objectives in support of Goal 1, including:

- Increase qualified interpreter services in court-ordered/court-operated proceedings and seek to expand services to additional court venues; and
- Increase the availability of language access services to all court users.

f. Structure of the Language Access Plan

The Language Access Plan identifies eight major goals around which the plan is organized. Each goal includes an issue description to (1) provide background on the problem/issue that the goal is intended to address, (2) discuss the relevant input received by the Joint Working Group

during the public participation process, and (3) highlight California's unique opportunities and challenges. The issue descriptions contained within each of the eight goals inform the recommendations that are designed to help achieve that particular goal. The plan also includes appendices that provide more detailed information on plan components, such as guidelines for the provision of video remote interpreting and tools to assist in the delivery of language access services.

g. Concepts Utilized Throughout the Language Access Plan

The Language Access Plan uses certain terms or phrases with a very deliberate purpose and concrete meaning. To avoid confusion, here are the common concepts used throughout and the intended meaning for purposes of the Language Access Plan:

Civil cases or proceedings: Any non-criminal matter in the state courts, including civil limited and unlimited, family law, juvenile dependency, probate, small claims, mental competency, and others.

Court proceedings: Any civil or criminal proceedings presided over by a judicial officer, such as a judge, commissioner or temporary judge, or managed by officers of the court or their official designees, such as special masters, referees and arbitrators.

Court-ordered, court-operated programs, services or events: Any programs, services or events that are both ordered by the court AND operated or managed by the court. It does not include a program or activity that is operated or under the control of a third-party provider. It does

include programs, such as Family Court Services orientation and mediation, or any other event directed by the judicial officer and occurring in relation to a pending case (e.g., “day of court” mediations in Family Law or Unlawful Detainer matters, or settlement discussions directed to occur by the judicial officer).¹⁰

Language threshold: Several recommendations in the Language Access Plan provide for translation of written or audiovisual materials. Because the language needs and demographics vary significantly among California’s 58 counties, and within counties themselves, the Language Access Plan proposes a method for determining how many and which languages any materials should be translated into. The proposed general language threshold is: “In English and up to five other languages, based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations and other entities working with LEP populations.” It is the Joint Working Group’s intent that the Implementation Task Force conduct a review of available data and, in consultation with experts, provide more specific guidelines to local courts regarding the number of languages, and population thresholds, for which they should provide translation.

Provisional qualification: The process courts must follow when no certified or registered interpreter is available to interpret, and the court needs to appoint someone else to interpret for a given proceeding. Provisional qualification is accomplished through a series of mandated

¹⁰ With respect to programs or services that may be court-ordered but are not operated or managed by the court (such as referrals to counseling or parenting classes), other court-related services (such as court-appointed guardians, custody evaluators who are not court staff, or forensic accountants), and non-mandatory programs such as voluntary mediation, this Language Access Plan recommends that judicial officers must determine that linguistically accessible services are available before LEP court users are ordered or referred to those services.

steps, including a finding of good cause, and the completion of a Judicial Council form, as laid out in [California Rule of Court 2.893](#), which delineates the procedure for provisionally qualifying someone to interpret in a criminal or juvenile proceeding.¹¹

Qualified interpreters:

(1) Certified and registered interpreters as credentialed by the Judicial Council and who are in compliance with the [Professional Standards and Ethics for California Court Interpreters](#), and

(2) “Provisionally qualified” interpreters (non-certified and non-registered) who are determined to be qualified on a provisional basis.

¹¹ Since no rule of court exists at this time for civil proceedings, this plan recommends amending the rule of court for provisional qualification in criminal and juvenile proceedings to include civil proceedings, as well as interim requirements until the rule is amended. The two parts of the current process for the court to appoint a noncertified or nonregistered interpreter are discussed in greater detail in Goal 2: (1) provisional qualifications of a noncertified or nonregistered interpreter, and (2) unavailability of a certified or registered interpreter.

II. STRATEGIC GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal 1: Improve Early Identification of and Data Collection on Language Needs

Goal Statement

The Judicial Council will identify statewide language access needs of limited English proficient (LEP) Californians, and the courts will identify the specific language access needs within local communities, doing so as early as possible in court interactions with LEP Californians.

Issue Description

Stakeholders unanimously agreed that the failure to identify the language needs of LEP court users early enough in the court process causes ripple effects throughout the system. When the need for a court interpreter is not identified in advance of a court appearance, courts and litigants may be forced to rely on untrained interpreters, often family or friends of the litigant, to provide language services. As discussed in more depth in Goal 2, the use of untrained interpreters can have serious and potentially dangerous consequences.

As language access services are expanded into more types of cases, early identification of LEP court users will become even more critical. Early identification makes it possible for courts to schedule qualified interpreters efficiently when calendaring cases in the various courtrooms where they are needed. It similarly allows courts to assign bilingual staff more efficiently to appropriate areas within the courthouse, and to share court interpreters across counties

through the cross-assignment process when staff interpreters are not available in one court but free in another. Early identification also reduces delays for the courts by minimizing the need to continue cases when the need for an interpreter becomes apparent too late in the process. Also, by allowing courts to address an LEP litigant's legal matters without unnecessary delays, early identification increases court user satisfaction.

a. Early Identification of Language Needs

Issue Description

The identification of the language needs of LEP court users should occur through a number of mechanisms, from an LEP person's self-identification to identification by court staff, justice partners, and judicial officers. While courts should encourage an individual's self-identification as LEP, courts should not rely on that exclusively. Some LEP court users may fail to request language access services because they may misjudge the level of proficiency required to communicate in court or be afraid of discrimination or bias.

Further, assessing the need for language services must occur throughout the life of the case.

While providing information about language access at the filing of a case is critical, it is important to recognize and provide for the fact that an LEP person's need for such services may precede the filing of a case or may arise after a court ruling. Ideally, courts should have a system for documenting the requests that are made and whether the request was met, including proceedings and events both in and out of court.

Recommendations:

1. Courts will identify the language access needs for each LEP court user, including parties, witnesses, or other persons with a significant interest,¹² at the earliest possible point of contact with the LEP person. The language needs will be clearly and consistently documented in the case management system and/or any other case record or file, as appropriate given a court’s existing case information record system, and this capability should be included in any future system upgrades or system development. (Phase 1)
2. A court’s provision or denial of language services must be tracked in the court’s case information system, however appropriate given a court’s capabilities. Where current tracking of provision or denial is not possible, courts must make reasonable efforts to modify or update their systems to capture relevant data as soon as feasible. (Phases 1, 2)
3. Courts should establish protocols by which justice partners¹³ can indicate to the court that an individual requires a spoken language interpreter at the earliest possible point of contact with the court system.¹⁴ (Phase 1)

¹² “Persons with a significant interest” include persons with a significant interest or involvement in a case or with legal decision-making authority, or whose presence or participation in the matter is necessary or appropriate as determined by a judicial officer. Examples of persons who may have a significant interest include: victims; legal guardians or custodians of a minor involved in a case as a party, witness, or victim; and legal guardians or custodians of adults involved in a case as a party, witness, or victim.

¹³ Justice partners include legal services providers, law enforcement agencies, public defenders, district attorneys, county and city jails, child protective services, domestic violence advocates and shelters, and others.

¹⁴ Options to be explored by the Implementation Task Force may include development of a Judicial Council form, modifying all relevant Judicial Council forms, creating a form to be filed with all initial pleadings, or working with justice partners to develop the protocols.

4. Courts will establish mechanisms¹⁵ that invite LEP persons to self-identify as needing language access services upon contact with any part of the court system (using, for example, “I speak” cards [see page 56 for a sample card]). In the absence of self-identification, judicial officers and court staff must proactively seek to ascertain a court user’s language needs. (Phase 1)

5. Courts will inform court users about the availability of language access services at the earliest points of contact between court users and the court. The notice must include, where accurate and appropriate, that language access services are free. Courts should take into account that the need for language access services may occur earlier or later in the court process, so information about language services must be available throughout the duration of a case. Notices should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. Notice must be provided to the public, justice partners, legal services agencies, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations.¹⁶ (Phase 1)

¹⁵ The Judicial Council’s Civil and Small Claims Advisory Committee is creating a fee waiver form for interpreter requests.

¹⁶ For example, notices should be posted on the court’s website, on signage throughout the courthouse, at court information counters, in court brochures, in a document included with initial service of process, at court-community events, in public service notices and announcements in the media, including ethnic media, and in any embassies or consulates located in the county. To address low literacy populations and speakers of languages that do not have a written component, video and audio recordings should be developed to provide this notice.

b. Data Collection

Issue Description

Assessing the number of LEP persons likely to seek out court services, and the frequency of contact of these LEP persons with the courts, will help provide LEP court users with improved access to court services. In order to determine the language access needs both in any given court's community and statewide, the Judicial Council and individual courts should augment existing data collection methods. Currently, to plan for the provision of interpreter services, the Judicial Council is required to conduct a study of spoken language interpreter use in the trial courts, every five years. The next study is due to the Legislature in 2015.¹⁷ Key findings from the study published in 2010 covering the years 2004 through 2008 include the following:

- Courts provided more than 1 million service days¹⁸ of spoken language interpretation services in 147 languages;
- 17 languages accounted for 98.5% of all service days (see table, Appendix E);
- Spanish continued to be the most used language, representing 83% of all mandated service days in the state; and
- Statewide, the only significant changes in the number of service days by language were increases in Spanish (11%) and Mandarin (89%).

¹⁷ To better inform future decisions regarding interpreter use for limited English proficient (LEP) court users in civil proceedings, the *2015 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* will also collect data and conduct analysis on interpretation needs in these areas. Findings and recommendations from this study will assist in the future designation of the languages to include in the certification program for court interpreters. An additional component of the study will explore use of interpreters in civil proceedings. Currently, there are court interpreter certification exams given for the following designated languages: American Sign Language, Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Farsi has been designated for certification, but is not yet certified. Even though Western Armenian and Japanese are certified languages, there is no bilingual interpreting exam presently available.

¹⁸ Service days in the 2010 study are defined as the sum of interpreter assignments including full days, half-days, and night sessions.

When engaging in these data collection activities and projecting language needs, courts should not rely exclusively on the numbers provided by the U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS). The type of detailed, local information that courts need to identify the language needs of their constituents may not be adequately captured by these more traditional methods of demographic data collection. Further, many ethnic and linguistic minorities and emerging LEP communities are underreported in these sources of data, as was commented by community-based organizations during the public hearings.

Organizations working with specific populations have collected their own data to identify areas where census data may not accurately reflect our state's linguistic diversity. For example, California Rural Legal Assistance conducted a comprehensive study¹⁹ of migrant farm workers that provides useful information on indigenous languages spoken in different areas of our state. Other reliable sources of data that courts might contact to determine the unique needs of their communities are the California Department of Education, the Migration Policy Institute, and local welfare agencies that track the language needs of government assistance recipients at the local level. Engaging community-based agencies such as legal services agencies, refugee organizations, and community social services providers can provide local courts with a better understanding of the language needs of the communities they serve. Partnering with agencies that serve LEP court users in the court's community can also lead to the development of

¹⁹ Available at www.crla.org/sites/all/files/content/uploads/News/NewsUpdate/IFS-ReportJan10.pdf

culturally appropriate and effective strategies for the early identification of LEP court users needing court services.

With regard to the provision of language access services, courts currently track and report the amount of money spent on interpreter services. To gauge overall need, courts should also track and report expenditures on other services such as translations and multilingual signage or videos. All of these data collection efforts will provide critically necessary information to support funding requests, and will help courts determine how best to deploy court interpreters and bilingual staff and equipment to maximize the effective and efficient provision of language services.

Recommendations:

6. The Judicial Council and the courts will continue to expand and improve data collection on interpreter services, and expand language services cost reporting to include amounts spent on other language access services and tools such as translations, interpreter or language services coordination, bilingual pay differential for staff, and multilingual signage or technologies. This information is critical in supporting funding requests as the courts expand language access services into civil cases. (Phase 1)
7. The Judicial Council and the courts should collect data in order to anticipate the numbers and languages of likely LEP court users. Whenever data is collected, including for these purposes, the courts and the Judicial Council should look at other sources of data beyond the U.S. Census, such as school systems, health departments, county social services, and local community-based agencies. (Phase 2)

Goal 2: Provide Qualified Language Access Services in All Judicial Proceedings

Goal Statement

By 2017, and beginning immediately where resources permit, qualified interpreters will be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all courtroom proceedings and, by 2020, in all court-ordered, court-operated events.²⁰

a. Provision of Qualified Interpreters in Court Proceedings

Issue Description

Court proceedings such as hearings and trials are arguably the most critical events during which a limited English proficient speaker will need high quality language assistance services to communicate with the participants in the proceeding. Existing law mandates that interpreters be provided by the court for parties, at no cost to them, for all criminal cases including felonies, misdemeanors, and infractions (including traffic cases).²¹ Similarly, interpreters must also be provided if the defendant in a criminal case is a juvenile and the case proceeds as a juvenile delinquency matter. In juvenile dependency cases, interpreters must be provided by the court if the court appoints an attorney for the minor or a parent and the appointment of the interpreter is necessary to ensure the effective assistance of counsel.²²

²⁰ Within the context of this plan, and consistent with Evidence Code section 756 (d), the term “provided” (as in “qualified court interpreters will be provided”) means at no cost to the LEP court user and without cost recovery.

²¹ Cal. Const., art. I, § 14: “A person unable to understand English who is charged with a crime has a right to an interpreter throughout the proceedings.” Government Code section 68092(a) provides that the court shall pay for interpreters’ fees in criminal cases.

²² Cal. Rules of Court, rule 5.534(h)(1)(A) and (B); *In re Emilye A. v. Ebrahim A.* (1992) 9 Cal.App.4th 1695.

With regard to civil cases, however, California law regarding provision of interpreters has historically been quite complex. Until January 2015, state statutes and case law authorized or required the expenditure of court funds for in-courtroom interpreters only in certain civil case matters so courts, on a discretionary basis, have provided interpreters to parties only in proceedings involving domestic violence, ancillary family law matters, and elder or dependent adult abuse protective orders. For most civil matters, however, general statutes providing parties to pay for interpreters in civil actions arguably prohibited court funds from being spent for that purpose, or in a more permissive interpretation, only allowed court funds to be spent on needed interpreters when the parties are indigent.²³ Effective January 1, 2015, however, [Evidence Code section 756](#) will go into effect, expressly authorizing courts to provide interpreters in civil matters, at no cost to the parties, with a prioritization by case type and preference within some priorities for indigent parties.

The passage of Evidence Code section 756 addresses many of the comments from stakeholders and the public—and the view of the Joint Working Group—that civil cases such as family law matters, evictions, guardianships, and conservatorships are critical to the lives of Californians. A large percentage of litigants in these types of cases, including LEP litigants, represent themselves in court and thus do not have the assistance of an attorney to explain the procedures or the law, or to help them present their case to a judicial officer. The use of untrained interpreters may lead to significant misunderstandings and a resulting lack of redress for LEP litigants, and is even more problematic in these cases where the parties are

²³ Gov. Code, § 68092(b).

unrepresented. Their use can also cause confusion and slow the court process. Overall, relying on unqualified interpreters can result in serious and potentially dangerous consequences, such as necessary protective orders not being issued. Also challenging are situations when no interpreter (trained or untrained) can be found, and the matter has to be continued to a later date, causing monetary and resource losses for LEP court users and the courts. When justice is delayed, both litigants and the courts lose in the process.

Using a well-meaning but unqualified interpreter, who does not understand legal terminology or court procedures, and whose performance no one may be able to assess, can mask these miscommunications and errors, thus giving the appearance of meaningful access when none is in fact provided. Additionally, in an effort to communicate with LEP court users, judicial officers sometimes ask lawyers or advocates for these litigants to interpret for their clients or for witnesses, which creates significant conflicts of interest and ethical issues for these providers, while preventing them from properly focusing on the tasks for which they are present in the courtroom.

In many civil matters where fundamental interests are at stake, such as housing, personal safety, or the determination of a parental relationship, the cost to LEP litigants of retaining their own certified or registered interpreter (or the chance of being charged for interpreter services provided by the court after the case) can be prohibitive. It is for this reason that many of the stakeholders submitting spoken and written public comment emphasized the need for courts to provide interpreters free of cost to the LEP litigant. Some LEP litigants, particularly in more

complex limited and unlimited civil matters, may have the financial means to pay for their own interpreter (even if not initially, possibly after a money judgment is issued in their favor).

However, the Joint Working Group is cognizant of a potential chilling effect on LEP litigants, including their initial decisions whether to pursue a legal course of action, if they are required to pay for their own court interpreters. For this reason, it is the goal of this plan, and consistent with new Evidence Code section 756, that certified and registered interpreters be provided by courts without cost to the LEP court user.

Even when the right to an interpreter is recognized by law, or when an interpreter is allowed to be provided by the court at court expense, there may not always be a qualified interpreter available. When no certified or registered interpreter is available to interpret in criminal matters, the court is required to make specific findings before provisionally qualifying a proposed interpreter to interpret for a given proceeding. This is accomplished through a series of mandated steps, including a finding of good cause, and the completion of a Judicial Council form, as laid out in rule 2.893 of the California Rules of Court. Because interpreters have generally not been provided in civil cases there is no official mechanism for qualifying noncertified or nonregistered court interpreters in such cases.²⁴ Additionally, although a court user may be entitled to an interpreter, there is no designated process for them to waive the provision of an interpreter, should they wish to do so.²⁵

²⁴ Goal 8 addresses recommendations for statutory or rule changes that may be necessary to expand the use of interpreters in civil proceedings.

²⁵ Goal 8 addresses a recommendation for development of a policy regarding guidelines for a waiver of interpreter services by an LEP court user. Recommendation 50 under Goal 6 addresses the necessary training that will be required for judicial officers and court staff to ensure understanding of the waiver requirements, including the appropriateness of waiver and any potential for misuse.

With respect to the qualification process itself, court certified and registered interpreters in California are credentialed by the Judicial Council, with testing, continuing education, and ethical requirements overseen by the Judicial Council’s Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit.²⁶ The speakers at the listening sessions and public hearings agreed that California is a leader in its credentialing of court interpreters. As Goal 5 states, the plan recommends that the existing standards for credentialing remain and, where appropriate, be further developed. Further discussion is provided below under the issue description in Goal 5.

Recommendations:

8. Qualified interpreters must be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all court proceedings, including civil proceedings²⁷ as prioritized in Evidence Code section 756 (see Appendix H), and including Family Court Services mediation.
(Phases 1 and 2)
9. Pending amendment of California Rules of Court, rule 2.893, when good cause exists, a noncertified or nonregistered court interpreter may be appointed in a court proceeding in any matter, civil or criminal, only after he or she is determined to be qualified by following the procedures for provisional qualification. These procedures are currently set forth, for criminal and juvenile delinquency matters, in rule 2.893 (and, for civil matters, will be set forth once the existing rule of court is amended).
(See Recommendation 50, on training for judicial officers and court staff regarding

²⁶ More information at <http://www.courts.ca.gov/programs-interpreters.htm>.

²⁷ As provided in [Evidence Code section 756\(g\)](#), the provision of interpreters in civil proceedings must not affect the provision of interpreter services in criminal, juvenile or other proceedings for which interpreters were previously mandated.

the provisional qualification procedures, and Recommendation 70, on amending rule 2.893 to include civil cases.) (Phases 1 and 2)

b. Provision of Court Interpreters in Court-Ordered, Court-Operated Programs, Services, or Events

Issue Description

Legal services providers, community members, court administrators, and justice partner representatives expressed concern that LEP litigants frequently find themselves in a court-ordered, court-operated program, service or event outside of a courtroom that is critical for compliance with court rulings or procedures. In these settings, court users are even less likely to obtain interpreter services, given the limited resources faced by many courts. For example, just as the court hearing on custody should be accessible to LEP litigants, Family Court Services mediation—a mandatory process for parents who are not in agreement about child custody or visitation issues— should similarly be fully available to LEP parents. During the public hearing process, legal services advocates and others criticized the common use of unqualified and sometimes entirely inappropriate interpreters—such as family, friends, or even opposing parties—for these events.

While recognizing that courts cannot be made responsible for providing language access services for programs that are not operated or managed by the court, it is common for judicial officers to order parties to participate in or complete outside programs or activities, and condition compliance with a court order on such participation or completion. These programs

offer a benefit to participants (such as parenting classes, batterer intervention programs, or counseling) or may be critical to resolution of a case (such as mediation, or supervised visitation programs that allow for safe child visitation). When making court orders, courts should not create a situation for an LEP court user that conditions his or her compliance on participation in a program for which no language access exists. If resources are so limited that interpreters or other appropriate modes of language access services are not available, courts should develop mechanisms for an LEP court user to comply with the court's order by participating in a comparable, yet linguistically accessible, program or activity, or by waiving participation for the LEP court user. This last alternative is least preferable as, presumably, these court programs and activities are critical for the proper resolution of a case. LEP persons should not be burdened with a less desirable alternative to resolve their court matters (for example, paying a fine rather than attending traffic school) because there are no linguistically accessible options available nor should an LEP individual be denied the benefit of the services otherwise deemed necessary. Recommendation 33 below addresses the need for courts to make reasonable efforts to identify or enter into contracts with providers that can provide language access services.

Recommendations:

10. Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2 and 3)

11. An LEP individual should not be ordered to participate in a court ordered program if that program does not provide appropriate language accessible services. If a judicial officer does not order participation in services due to the program's lack of language capacity, the court should order the litigant to participate in an appropriate alternative program that provides language access services for the LEP court user. In making its findings and orders, the court should inquire if the program provides language access services to ensure the LEP court user's ability to meet the requirements of the court. (Phase 2)

c. Use of Technology for Providing Access in Courtroom Proceedings

Issue Description

In order to achieve the goal of universal provision of interpreters in judicial proceedings, the appropriate use of technology must be considered. From the use of various forms of remote interpreting (telephonic or video) to developing multilingual audiovisual material, technology will, by necessity, be part of any comprehensive solution to the problem of lack of language access in judicial proceedings. The use of remote interpreters in courtroom proceedings can be particularly effective in expanding language access.

The quality of interpretation is of paramount importance and should never be compromised.

Generally, an in person interpreter is preferred over a remote interpreter but there are situations in which remote interpreting is appropriate, and can be used with greater efficiency.

Remote interpreting, however, may only be used where it will allow LEP court users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings.

Among the benefits of remote interpreting is the facilitation of prompt availability of language access for litigants by providing certified and registered interpreter services with less waiting time and fewer postponements; this saves both the court user's and the court's valuable time. In addition, having qualified interpreters more readily available through remote interpreting can decrease the use of less qualified interpreters, can decrease dismissals for failure to meet court deadlines and can decrease the frequency of attorneys or parties waiving interpreter services or proceeding as if the LEP person is not present, in order to avoid delays. By decreasing interpreter travel time between venues and increasing the number of events being interpreted by individual interpreters, remote interpreting allows more LEP litigants to be served, in more areas, utilizing the same personnel and financial resources, thereby greatly expanding language access.

In 2010 and 2011, California conducted a six month pilot of video remote interpreting (VRI) in American Sign Language in four courts. The purpose of the pilot was to test ASL VRI guidelines that had been prepared by the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel. Four remote interpreters provided services, and all stakeholders were included in the evaluation process. The evaluation showed improved access to court certified ASL interpreters, and high participant satisfaction. As a result of the pilot, the ASL VRI guidelines were successfully refined and completed.

Subsequent to the completion of the pilot, use of VRI in ASL events has expanded to more than

a dozen courts around the state. Although this pilot did not address some distinctly different issues that arise in remote interpretation of spoken language, it did establish that VRI can be used to provide meaningful language access in a variety of courtroom environments if done with appropriate controls and with equipment that meets minimum technology requirements.

Comments from the courts also noted that remote access is not just for interpreting; it is a means to provide a whole variety of services in places far away from our courthouses. For example, where satellite courts have been closed, or where jails are far away from courthouses, remote technology has allowed courts to continue to provide a level of service to those locations. Brief proceedings, such as arraignments, can also be done remotely, saving travel time and costs. It is important that courts, and the branch as a whole, integrate language access planning with information technology planning, to accommodate and anticipate all the differing capabilities expected of remote access technology for total bandwidth, infrastructure, equipment, and training.²⁸

As explained by many in the listening sessions, there are also disadvantages to remote interpreting. Remote interpreting may be perceived as providing second-tier language access services and could, potentially, compromise the accuracy and precision of the interpretation. One study showed that interpreter accuracy and level of fatigue was affected when interpreters

²⁸ The successful implementation of the recommendations contained in California's Language Access Plan will require careful coordination with the related efforts of the Judicial Council Technology Committee, especially on the issues of ensuring the necessary infrastructure, equipment, training, and technical support for the use of remote interpreting.

provided services remotely, particularly where the event exceeded 15 to 20 minutes in length.²⁹

Additionally, remote interpreting can dilute the control an interpreter is able to exercise in ensuring accurate interpretation and removes the important visual context of the setting including, potentially, the nonverbal cues of both the LEP speaker and others in the courtroom. All of these are factors for consideration when remote interpreting is being used to facilitate language access in the courtroom.

Any introduction of remote interpreting in the courtroom will have to include, in advance, appropriate training and education for all court personnel who will be involved in the court proceedings. Judicial officers, interpreter coordinators, and other court staff will need to be familiar with the factors that make an event appropriate for remote technologies, as well as with the technologies themselves, and with the potential drawbacks of using remote technology, so problems can be anticipated or resolved quickly, or the remote interpretation terminated. Judicial officers in particular will have to understand the remote interpretation process to ensure they are managing the courtroom and the proceedings appropriately. Suggested language for the judicial officer when considering objections related to remote interpreting is provided in Appendix C. Similarly, interpreters will have to be trained on the use of the technologies utilized by the court, as well as on the particular challenges that remote interpretation could present, such as the earlier onset of interpreter fatigue, an inability to adequately see or hear the participants, and the criticality of immediately reporting any

²⁹ Braun, Sabine, "Recommendations for the use of video-mediated interpreting in criminal proceedings," in *Videoconference and Remote Interpreting in Criminal Proceedings*, eds. Braun, Sabine, and Taylor, Judith L. (Guildford: University of Surrey, 2011) at p. 279, available at http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/303017/2/14_Braun_recommendations.pdf, as part of the AVIDICUS Project aimed at assessing the viability of video-mediated interpreting in the criminal justice system.

impediment to performance or other ethical issues. Court staff must be trained and available to repair any technical problems with the equipment.

Language access can also be expanded by the use of multilingual audiovisual material; it is a simple use of technology that is relatable to all court users. For example, in some courtrooms where a particular type of case is heard (e.g., traffic, small claims, and AB 1058 governmental child support calendars), general introductory remarks that educate the litigants on some basic legal principles and procedures are often provided. For those courtrooms or calendars for which it makes sense, courts might develop a short multilingual video to communicate those introductory remarks to LEP persons. Some of these videos might also be made available on the court's website to orient litigants to what will be expected of them in court before their court appearance. (These videos will also help to address a common request, expressed by legal services providers working with LEP populations, that the Language Access Plan include development of tools for serving low literacy populations and speakers of indigenous languages or non-written languages.) Alternatively, when videos are not available, a live interpreter who is offsite might be used via video equipment to provide interpretation of the judge's general introductory remarks before a calendar is called.

Recommendations:

12. The use of in-person, certified and registered court interpreters is preferred for court proceedings, but courts may consider the use of remote interpreting where it is appropriate for a particular event. Remote interpreting may only be used if it

will allow LEP court-users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings.

(Phase 1)

13. When using remote interpreting in the courtroom, the court must satisfy, to the extent feasible, the prerequisites, considerations and guidelines for remote interpreting set forth in Appendix B. (Phase 1)
14. The Implementation Task Force will establish minimum technology requirements for remote interpreting which will be updated on an ongoing basis and which will include minimum requirements for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting.³⁰ (Phase 1)
15. Courts using remote interpreting should strive to provide video, used in conjunction with enhanced audio equipment, for courtroom interpretations, rather than relying on telephonic interpreting. (Phase 1)
16. The Judicial Council should conduct a pilot project, in alignment with the Judicial Branch’s Tactical Plan for Technology 2014–2016. This pilot should, to the extent possible, collect relevant data on: due process issues, participant satisfaction, whether remote interpreting increases the use of certified and registered interpreters as opposed to provisionally qualified interpreters, the effectiveness of a variety of available technologies (for both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation), and a cost-benefit analysis. The Judicial Council should make clear that this pilot project would not preclude or prevent any court from proceeding on

³⁰ See, e.g., Council of Language Access Coordinators, “Remote Interpreting Guide for Courts and Court Staff,” (unpublished draft, June 2014)

its own to deploy remote interpreting, so long as it allows LEP court users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings. (Phase 1)

17. In order to maximize the use and availability of California’s highly skilled certified and registered interpreters, the Judicial Council should consider creating a pilot program through which certified and registered interpreters would be available to all courts on a short-notice basis to provide remote interpreting services. (Phase 2)
18. The Judicial Council should continue to create multilingual standardized videos for high-volume case types that lend themselves to generalized, not localized, legal information, and provide them to courts in the state’s top eight languages and captioned in other languages. (Phase 1)

d. Other Considerations When Appointing Interpreters

Issue Description

Scheduling

Interpreter representatives in particular expressed concerns about the lack of understanding regarding the very challenging conditions that busy trial courtrooms present for interpreters. Interpreting is a highly specialized skill that requires a great degree of training and preparation. It is mentally taxing, and studies confirm that interpreting mistakes increase after 20 to 30 minutes, and an interpreter’s ability to self-monitor and self-correct correspondingly diminishes in this time. Court administrators and judicial officers should be mindful of this reality in scheduling interpreters for longer matters, in allowing for rest breaks, and in the overall management of the courtroom.

Calendar coordination is an important tool for appointing interpreters in an efficient manner. However, legal services providers and others have raised concerns that calendaring matters specifically for certain LEP populations in order to ensure the availability of interpreters can have the unintended consequence of allowing law enforcement agencies, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, to target LEP court users. Therefore, any efforts to maximize the use and availability of interpreters by identifying court proceedings where interpreters will be required must be done in a way that does not create unique risks for LEP court users, or have a chilling effect on their access to court services.

Additionally, Judicial Council staff assist the courts by providing calendar coordination of employee interpreters from other courts through a manual cross-assignment system. This system could be improved with automation and could be expanded to coordinate additional language access resources.

Misrepresentation of Credentials

Certified and registered interpreters also alerted the Joint Working Group to concerns about the misrepresentation by some interpreters of their credentials. For example, some interpreters used by the court claim to be certified or registered but provide false numbers or fail to provide their certified or registered interpreter number (as issued by the Judicial Council upon credentialing). Additionally, court staff and bench officers do not always verify that an interpreter has his or her interpreter oath on file with the court. These concerns are addressed,

effective January 2015, under amended Government Code § 68561, in particular subsections (g) and (f), which require a finding on the record of the validity of an interpreter’s credentials before a proceeding. This plan therefore incorporates the new, statutorily-required procedures and proposes training for judicial officers and court staff on those requirements (see Recommendations 19 and 50).

Role of Bilingual Staff

On the issue of appointing interpreters to court proceedings, stakeholders raised concerns about the use of court bilingual staff as interpreters. Bilingual staff play a critical role in providing language access in the courts and their appropriate use and qualifications are addressed in other areas of this plan. For purposes of Goal 2 (Provision of Qualified Language Access Services in All Judicial Proceedings), judicial officers and court staff should understand that certified and registered interpreters possess highly specialized skills in language and interpreting techniques that are required in courtroom proceedings, skills which bilingual staff do not usually possess. Additionally, placing bilingual staff in the position to act as interpreters may create ethical dilemmas for them as their roles vis-à-vis the litigant and the court process become different, and information they may have gathered as staff may now impede their ability to interpret impartially and objectively. Therefore, it is critical that if bilingual staff are ever to be appointed to interpret in court proceedings, all of the required steps for finding good cause and for provisional qualification be followed.

Friends and Family as “Interpreters”

As has been discussed earlier, the use of friends or family as interpreters can create serious issues concerning meaningful and accurate interpretation of proceedings. It should be noted here that, in addition to the absence of quality control, there are other factors that preclude the use of friends and family as interpreters in court proceedings: they are not neutral individuals, and so, they usually have an inherent conflict or bias; they may have a personal interest in misinterpreting what is being said; and, if minors, they may suffer emotionally from being put in “the middle” of conflict between or on behalf of their parents. It was the consensus of the stakeholders addressing this issue that minor children should never be used to interpret in court proceedings.

Recommendations:

19. Effective January 2015, pursuant to Government Code section 68561(g) and (f), judicial officers, in conjunction with court administrative personnel, must ensure that the interpreters being appointed are qualified, properly represent their credentials on the record,³¹ and have filed with the court their interpreter oaths. (See Recommendation 50, which discusses training of judicial officers and court staff on these subjects.)³² (Phase 1)
20. The Judicial Council should expand the existing formal regional coordination system to improve efficiencies in interpreter scheduling for court proceedings and

³¹ See California Supreme Court Committee on Judicial Ethics Opinion (CJEO) Formal Opinion # 2013-002 (December 2013) at http://www.judicialethicsopinions.ca.gov/sites/default/files/CJEO_Formal_Opinion_2013-002_0.pdf for a determination of what constitutes the record when no court reporter or electronic recording is available.

³² While courts may use a bilingual person to communicate minor scheduling issues when no qualified interpreter is available, the record should reflect that no interpreter was present.

cross-assignments between courts throughout the state. (See Recommendation 30, addressing coordination for bilingual staff and interpreters for non-courtroom events.) (Phase 2)

21. Courts should continue to develop methods for using interpreters more efficiently and effectively, including but not limited to calendar coordination. Courts should develop these systems in a way that does not have a chilling effect on LEP court users' access to court services. (Phase 2)
22. Absent exigent circumstances, when appointing a noncertified, nonregistered interpreter, courts must not appoint persons with a conflict of interest or bias with respect to the matter. (Phase 1)
23. Minors will not be appointed to interpret in courtroom proceedings nor court-ordered and court-operated activities. (Phase 1)
24. Absent exigent circumstances, courts should avoid appointing bilingual court staff to interpret in courtroom proceedings; if the court does appoint staff, he or she must meet all of the provisional qualification requirements. (Phase 2)

Goal 3: Provide Language Access Services at All Points of Contact Outside Judicial Proceedings

Goal Statement

By 2020, courts will provide language access services at all points of contact in the California courts. Courts will provide notice to the public of available language services.

Issue Description

As described elsewhere in this plan, LEP court users' language needs are not limited to the courtroom; the public's need for language assistance extends to all points of contact. While courtroom proceedings are critical, and therefore require the highest quality of language access services, other events and points of contact in the courthouse can also have a significant impact on case outcomes, the ability to procedurally and substantively advance a case forward, or the ability to proceed expeditiously. A person's ability to access the court system and seek legal redress or protection begins long before the LEP court user enters the courtroom to attend a hearing. Therefore, this Language Access Plan embraces the principle that it is the courts' responsibility to provide language access throughout the continuum of court services, from the first time an individual tries to access the court's website, or walks in the door of the courthouse, to posthearing events necessary to comply with court orders.

As reported by legal services providers and their clients at public hearings and in public comment, language barriers confront an LEP person from the moment he or she walks into a

courthouse or even before, when trying to get information by phone or from the court’s website. From the most basic inability to communicate what language they speak to the challenges presented by English-only signs and instructions, this lack of services can leave court users aimlessly wandering around the courthouse until frustration leads them to abandon their efforts, no matter how critical their legal need. The inability to understand and fill out mandatory forms and the bewilderment created by legal terminology and court instructions set forth only in English—all while dealing with the stresses of legal problems or even personal safety—have left all too many LEP legal services clients, self-help center users, and community members in a state of legal paralysis.

Experts and others who spoke at the various public hearings agreed that many of these points of contact do not require the skills of a qualified court interpreter. Many of the needs of thousands of LEP court users can be most appropriately addressed with appropriate language services from qualified bilingual staff. It was suggested that courts should explore different strategies for maximizing the use of bilingual staff to make more services available. Other tools can be made available at major points of contact to help improve access; for example, the ready availability of “I speak” cards (like the sample below) at all points of contact can help LEP court users indicate to staff what language they speak.



Translated materials such as referrals, informational brochures, and instructions can help communicate important information, such as how to prepare forms and how to file and serve them. Remote interpreting via telephone or video can also help staff at counters or self-help centers to provide linguistically competent services. Multilingual signage (discussed in detail under Goal 4), can also help LEP court users feel less lost and more able to negotiate the complex environment of the courthouse. Multilingual audiovisual material (for example, kiosks with touchscreen computers that can display visual and audio information in multiple languages) can also expand language access by instructing LEP court users what forms they may need or where they must go within the courthouse.

As was pointed out during the public hearings and listening sessions by court administrators, judicial officers, and other stakeholders, in order to rely on bilingual staff, it will be vital for

courts to take proactive steps to recruit and train bilingual individuals to serve at the more critical junctures, for example, where domestic violence form packets are disseminated (and explained). Where recruitment is challenging, educational providers should be enlisted to help identify potential sources for outreach and hiring by the court; they might also become partners in the training of these staff. In addition, bilingual staff should receive enhanced compensation for using their language skills. When facing budgetary obstacles to enhance language access, community volunteers whose language skills have been vetted can be a valuable resource to increase services. During the public hearings, the Joint Working Group learned that the Department of Education issues a “Seal of Biliteracy” to high school students in certain districts who pass a proficiency exam. Tapping into these and other sources of trained bilingual community members can significantly increase the court’s ability to serve its constituents in a culturally competent manner. At the core, it is vital that there be appropriate screening, monitoring, supervision, and training of staff and volunteers to ensure the quality and competency of the services provided.

Recommendations:

25. The court in each county will designate an office or person that serves as a language access resource for all court users, as well as court staff and judicial officers. This person or persons should be able to: describe all the services the court provides and what services it does not provide, access and disseminate all of the court’s multilingual written information as requested, and help LEP court users and court staff locate court language access resources. (Phase 1)

26. Courts should identify which points of contact are most critical for LEP court users, and, whenever possible, should place qualified bilingual staff at these locations.

(See Recommendation 47, which discusses possible standards for the appropriate qualification level of bilingual staff at these locations.) (Phase 1)
27. All court staff who engage with the public will have access to language assistance tools, such as translated materials and resources, multi-language glossaries and “I speak” cards, to determine a court user’s native language, direct him or her to the designated location for language services, and/or provide the LEP individual with brochures, instructions, or other information in the appropriate language. (Phase 2)
28. Courts should strive to recruit bilingual staff fluent in the languages most common in that county. In order to increase the bilingual applicant pool, courts should conduct outreach to educational providers in the community, such as local high schools, community colleges, and universities, to promote the career opportunities available to bilingual individuals in the courts. (Phase 1)
29. Courts will develop written protocols or procedures to ensure LEP court users obtain adequate language access services where bilingual staff are not available. For example, the court’s interpreter coordinator could be on call to identify which interpreters or staff are available and appropriate to provide services in the clerk’s office or self-help center. Additionally, the use of remote technologies such as telephone access to bilingual staff persons in another location or remote interpreting could be instituted. (Phase 2)

30. The Judicial Council should consider adopting policies that promote sharing of bilingual staff and certified and registered court interpreters among courts, using remote technologies, for language assistance outside of court proceedings. (Phase 2)
31. The courts and the Judicial Council should consider a pilot to implement the use of remote interpreter services for counter help and at self-help centers, incorporating different solutions, including court-paid cloud-based fee-for-service models or a court/centralized bank of bilingual professionals. (Phase 2)
32. The courts should consider a pilot to implement inter-court, remote attendance at workshops, trainings, or “information nights” conducted in non-English languages using a variety of equipment, including telephone, video-conferencing (WebEx, Skype), or other technologies. (Phase 2)
33. In matters with LEP court users, courts must determine that court-appointed professionals, such as psychologists, mediators, and guardians, can provide linguistically accessible services before ordering or referring LEP court users to those professionals. Where no such language capability exists, courts should make reasonable efforts to identify or enter into contracts with providers able to offer such language capabilities, either as bilingual professionals who can provide the service directly in another language or via qualified interpreters. (Phase 2)
34. Courts should consider the use of bilingual volunteers to provide language access services at points of contact other than court proceedings, where appropriate.

Bilingual volunteers and interns must be properly trained and supervised. (Phase 1)

35. As an alternative for traditional information dissemination, the Judicial Council should consider creating pilot programs to implement the use of language access kiosks in lobbies or other public waiting areas to provide a variety of information electronically, such as on a computer or tablet platform. This information should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 3)

Goal 4: Provide High Quality Multilingual Translation and Signage

Goal Statement

The Judicial Council, assisted by the courts, will identify best practices and resources for the highest quality of document translation and court signage in all appropriate languages.

Issue Description

Accurate and effective translation services are essential to ensure that documents and court signage commonly accessible to the public are available to limited-English speakers in their native languages. It is important to recognize, however, that not all languages have a written component, and some LEP persons may also have literacy challenges in their native language. Any strategies to provide translated materials should consider the manner of delivery of these materials to account for these factors, such as creating video and/or audio of the information otherwise available in writing. Video- and audio-based information will also benefit English speakers who have low literacy or who prefer to receive information through mechanisms other than written materials.

The California Courts Online Self-Help Center,³³ for example, provides hundreds of pages of information for court users in English and Spanish, but also incorporates videos on issues such as mediation in small claims, unlawful detainer, and civil harassment cases in English, Spanish, and Russian, as well as English/Spanish videos on issues pertaining to the child custody, juvenile

³³ In English at www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm and in Spanish at www.sucorte.ca.gov.

delinquency, and juvenile dependency processes. The Online Self-Help Center also has audio recordings of the most common domestic violence information sheets in English and Spanish and instructional videos for completion of common court forms, such as divorce petitions and responses, fee waivers, and domestic violence restraining orders.

While the statewide self-help website provides generalized information, stakeholders pointed out that local courts have no consistency in the translated information on their websites. Most courts only provide information on local procedures in English and do not have local forms available in other languages. Some provide links to the statewide website, but others do not. When translations are provided, legal services providers and their clients report inconsistencies in quality, with translation errors rendering some of the information legally incorrect and thus unusable.

With respect to Judicial Council forms, the Judicial Council has translated the most critical domestic violence forms into Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese, and most of the key family law forms and information sheets into Spanish. The Joint Working Group received comments from legal services providers asking why all forms in a “set” (e.g., all family law forms) are not translated, and urged the group to include in the Language Access Plan a recommendation that more forms be translated, particularly for conservatorships and guardianships, which are highly technical.

Court administrators and legal services providers alike recognized the significant costs associated with translations, but agreed that efficiencies can be built into the system, such as through better statewide coordination of translations so that general information may be translated at the state level for use by all courts. Court forms, juror information, and general educational material (in written or audio/video form) can be centrally translated and provided to courts for any necessary local adaptation. This approach can also incorporate quality control mechanisms to ensure that the translations are performed by competent and qualified translators with experience with court and legal translation and certification from the American Translators Association (ATA). Where appropriate, translator qualification may also be established by the translator's experience or education, such as a degree or certificate from an accredited university in the United States or the equivalent from another country in translation or linguistic studies.

In the meantime, existing tools can be used immediately to improve language access. While providing written translations of individual court orders may not always be feasible, it is fundamental to our judicial system that all court users understand the court orders that are issued. To this end, and where Judicial Council forms exist, courtrooms should have translated versions of these order forms (for information only) to provide to LEP parties, who can then look at their English court order side by side with the translated form in order to understand and comply with the order.

Easy-to-understand signage is also essential to help LEP court users navigate the courthouse and ensure they receive appropriate services. At the San Francisco public hearing, one expert testified that access starts with wayfinding, which requires the use of clear and intuitive visual cues to minimize confusion and assist all persons who enter a building. It is accomplished through the strategic and immediate visual location of common important public spaces: information desks, elevators, stairs, and restrooms. Wayfinding is then supplemented by appropriate signage. Static signage materials (printed materials or signs) can be augmented by dynamic or electronic signage, which allows courts to more easily update information provided to court users in multiple languages, similar to digital signs in airports. A suggestion was made at the public hearings for courts to create virtual courthouse tours on the web, which will enable court users to navigate a virtual courthouse prior to their actual visit. A similar tool could be created for smartphones, tablet computers, and other mobile devices. These important navigational tools can help to remove confusion and language access barriers, and reduce the apprehension that many court users may have about going to an unfamiliar courthouse.

Recommendations:

36. The Judicial Council will create a translation committee to develop and formalize a translation protocol for Judicial Council translations of forms, written materials, and audiovisual tools. The committee should collaborate with interpreter organizations and courts to develop a legal glossary in all certified languages, taking into account regional differences, to maintain consistency in the translation of legal terms. The committee's responsibilities will also include identifying qualifications for translators, and the prioritization, coordination, and oversight of

the translation of materials. The qualification of translators should include a requirement to have a court or legal specialization and be accredited by the American Translators Association (ATA), or to have been determined qualified to provide the translations based on experience, education, and references. Once the Judicial Council's translation protocol is established, individual courts should establish similar quality control and translation procedures for local forms, informational materials, recordings, and videos aimed at providing information to the public. Local court website information should use similarly qualified translators. Courts are encouraged to partner with local community organizations to accomplish this recommendation. (Phase 1)

37. The Judicial Council staff will work with courts to provide samples and templates of multilingual information for court users that are applicable on a statewide basis and adaptable for local use. (Phase 1)
38. The Judicial Council's staff will post on the California Courts website written translations of forms and informational and educational materials for the public as they become available and will send notice to the courts of their availability so that courts can link to these postings from their own websites. (Phase 1)
39. The staff of the Judicial Council should assist courts by providing plain-language translations of the most common and relevant signs likely to be used in a courthouse, and provide guidance on the use of internationally recognized icons, symbols, and displays to limit the need for text and, therefore, translation. Where more localized signage is required, courts should have all public signs in English

and translated in up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 2)

40. Courts will provide sight translation of court orders and should consider providing written translations of those orders to LEP persons when needed. At a minimum, courts should provide the translated version of the relevant Judicial Council form to help litigants compare their specific court order to the translated template form. (Phase 1)

41. The Judicial Council, partnering with courts, should ensure that new courthouse construction efforts, as well as redesign of existing courthouse space, are undertaken with consideration for making courthouses more easily navigable by all LEP persons. (Phase 2)

42. The Judicial Council's staff will provide information to courts interested in better wayfinding strategies, multilingual (static and dynamic) signage, and other design strategies that focus on assisting LEP court users. (Phase 2)

Goal 5: Expand High Quality Language Access Through the Recruitment and Training of Language Access Providers

Goal Statement

The courts and the Judicial Council will ensure that all providers of language access services deliver high quality services. Courts and the Judicial Council will establish proficiency standards for bilingual staff and volunteers appropriate to the service being delivered, offer ongoing training for all language services providers, and proactively recruit persons interested in becoming interpreters or bilingual court staff.

Issue Description

Proficiency Standards

Court-certified and registered interpreters in California are credentialed by the Judicial Council, with testing, continuing education, and ethical requirements overseen by the council's staff in the Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit. The speakers during the listening sessions and public hearings agreed that California has been and continues to be a leader in credentialing of its court interpreters, and this plan recommends that such high standards continue and be built upon. Some interpreters raised concerns that the current examination process that adopts the testing standards set by the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts' Certification Test may have lowered the qualifications required of new interpreters. After consideration and research, the Joint Working Group, advised by the Judicial Council's Court Interpreters Advisory Panel, decided that, at this time, the testing and certification

procedures remain appropriate and ensure that only the most qualified interpreters are able to pass and become certified or registered.

As interpreters are deployed in more and more civil cases, all stakeholders agreed that systematic training in the legal terminology used and procedural steps followed in civil case types would be beneficial for those interpreters who have not had experience in the civil arena. Similarly, as remote interpreting is gradually phased in for the expansion of language access, training will be necessary for interpreters and court personnel alike with regard to the technology and the optimum manner of using such equipment.

As stated in Goal 2, the court should provide qualified interpreters for all court proceedings. However, the majority of interactions LEP court users have with the court system will be outside the courtroom and will be handled by bilingual staff or volunteers. Therefore, courts must ensure that the individuals assigned to communicate with the LEP public be qualified and trained.

As legal services providers, their clients, and many others commented during the public hearings and listening sessions—and as detailed in the discussion of Goal 3—LEP court users must be able to obtain accurate and complete information throughout their dealings with the court system. Stakeholders all agree that different points of contact with the public, by their nature, involve different levels of interaction between staff and an LEP court user. For example, a bilingual court clerk working the cashier window will need to be able to carry out basic

monetary transactions in another language with an LEP court user and perhaps provide some standardized information on policies and procedures for paying fines. A bilingual staff person at a self-help center, on the other hand, will have to be able to communicate completely, almost with native-like fluency with an LEP court user needing assistance in understanding court procedures and in preparing forms. The self-help staff person must be able to understand nuanced conversations and questions, provide technical information using the correct legal terminology (in all relevant languages), and be precise in their use of language. A bilingual staff person at the filing counter in the clerk's office may not need to be proficient in writing in another language, but a bilingual family law facilitator may have to write instructions in another language or translate documents.

Many courts have internal procedures for determining the bilingual abilities of court staff, from new hires to existing staff. There is currently no uniform procedure for courts to test language proficiencies, but courts wishing to examine their existing policies or establish a standard for hires may take advantage of the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE),³⁴ currently used by the staff of the Judicial Council's Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit to credential most registered interpreters. The OPE is a speaking-ability test that uses the guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) to provide scores that correlate with a given level of language proficiency.³⁵ Courts can look at the ACTFL guidelines to adapt them to the court setting and determine what OPE scores are appropriate for the

³⁴ Information on the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) is available at <https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/California/Pages/CA-COURT-ORAL-PROFICIENCY-EXAM.aspx>.

³⁵ The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages describes five major levels of proficiency: Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice. Available at www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking.

different possible points of contact between LEP court users and bilingual staff.³⁶ The Joint Working Group reviewed the different levels and determined that ACTFL’s “intermediate mid” should be the minimum proficiency required for persons designated as bilingual staff, while allowing courts to exercise their discretion as to the circumstances or points of contact when a higher or lower level of proficiency may be required.

Various legal services providers and LEP court users have observed that court staff and written materials sometimes use different translated words or phrases to refer to the same legal or technical term. Bilingual staff and volunteers must be trained in legal terminology so that terms are used consistently by all persons having contact with the public. The Judicial Council and the courts should therefore collaborate on an agreed-upon glossary of legal terms. This glossary should take into account differences in usage due to the country of origin and linguistic background of the LEP communities served by a given court’s community.

While court interpreters and bilingual staff are the primary language access providers in day-to-day interactions with the court, translators who translate written material from one language to another are also key providers. Translators may translate court forms, exhibits, court signs, websites, scripts for video or other audiovisual tools, etc. The language skills required for qualified translation are unique, different from those required for interpretation and much

³⁶ An additional resource courts may want to consider when assessing the proficiency of bilingual staff is the Interagency Language Roundtable’s skill description for interpreter performance. The ILR is a nonfunded federal interagency organization established for the coordination and sharing of information about language-related activities at the federal level. The skill descriptions, located at www.govtilr.org/Skills/interpretationSLDsapproved.htm provide a rating system for assessing the language abilities of interpreters in government settings, and may be of guidance for courts in assessing bilingual staff who do not need the higher specialization of interpreters but may need similar language skills.

more advanced than those required of bilingual staff. Though many court interpreters are also qualified translators, not all are. Certified and registered court interpreters are not tested on their written skills in the non-English language, and only the American Translators Association (ATA) provides certification in translation, though not specific to the law or the court system. Therefore, it is critical that courts use competent, qualified translators for providing language access through any medium that requires written content.

Recruitment

While training and qualification of existing resources is critical, many participants in the public hearings and listening sessions pointed out the shortages throughout the state in qualified language access providers. To begin to address this gap between the supply and demand for language services providers, the Judicial Council and local courts should pursue strategies to enhance the recruitment of individuals who wish to seek a career as language access providers for the court, whether as certified and registered interpreters or as bilingual staff. Some interpreters voiced the belief that California has enough court interpreters to provide court hearing interpretation in most civil matters and court-mandated services (at least in Spanish, the most common language in our state other than English). However, all agree it is nevertheless vital to continue recruitment efforts so there will continue to be an adequate number of interpreters in future years.

The total number of certified and registered interpreters has increased to over 1,800 after a significant drop in the year 2000 when there were only 1,108 total interpreters. However, the

total number of Spanish-certified court interpreters today (1,342) is still lower than it was in 1995, when there were 1,536 Spanish-certified court interpreters.³⁷ The passage rate for certification examinations is low,³⁸ and many individuals give up on the process of becoming certified or registered due to the cost of repeated exams. Court partnerships with educational institutions, including community colleges and state universities, are essential to promote the better preparation of prospective interpreters since they are uniquely placed to train students to pass the certification and registration exams. Similarly, partners such as public defenders, district attorneys, and legal services providers can offer internship opportunities to prospective interpreters to expose them to, and prepare them for, a career in legal interpreting.

Education providers can also play a critical role in assisting courts in identifying bilingual Californians who may want to pursue a career in public service by working in the court system, and in helping to build the language skills of these prospective public servants. In fact, many community colleges and universities throughout the state are concentrating efforts to train bilingual students to serve as language services providers in the government and medical sectors. Courts and the legal system as a whole would greatly benefit from tapping into these resources. Even at the high school level, and earlier, schools can partner with their local courts to provide information and education to children about the benefits of building on language skills to improve opportunities for growth and employment after high school. Courts should include schools, colleges, and universities in court-community events where students have an

³⁷ See *2000 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*, Table 3.6, at p. 3.13, available upon request.

³⁸ Between July 2010 and June 2012, the exam pass rate for bilingual interpreting exams was approximately 10.8%.

opportunity to observe court professionals, from interpreters to bilingual court staff to judicial officers, as a complement to both civics education and career exploration.

Community-based organizations too can be powerful collaborators with courts in the recruitment of bilingual persons to work for the courts. They have insights into the barriers to education and employment for members of their communities, awareness of existing job training and skill-development programs, and the ability to help courts identify untapped resources for recruitment and training of prospective bilingual court employees. Internships and volunteer opportunities in the courts, under the supervision, guidance, and support of educational providers and community-based organizations, can be an avenue for recruitment of future court language service providers.

Recommendations:

43. Courts, the Judicial Council, and the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) will ensure that all interpreters providing language access services to limited English proficient court users are qualified and competent. Existing standards for qualifications should remain in effect and will be reviewed regularly by the CIAP.
(Phase 1)
44. The online statewide orientation program will continue to be available to facilitate orientation training for new interpreters working in the courts.³⁹ (Phase 1)

³⁹ This orientation is currently required for new interpreters prior to enrollment but is available to anyone, including interpreters for whom registered status is not applicable (e.g., deaf interpreters and indigenous language interpreters).

45. The Judicial Council and the courts should work with interpreter organizations and educational providers (including the California community college and state university systems) to examine ways to better prepare prospective interpreters to pass the credentialing examination. These efforts should include:

- Partnering to develop possible exam preparation courses and tests, and
- Creating internship and mentorship opportunities in the courts and in related legal settings (such as work with legal services providers or other legal professionals) to help train and prepare prospective interpreters in all legal areas.

(Phase 1)

46. The Judicial Council, interpreter organizations, and educational groups should collaborate to create training programs for those who will be interpreting in civil cases and those who will be providing remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

47. Courts must ensure that bilingual staff providing information to LEP court users are proficient in the languages in which they communicate. All staff designated as bilingual staff by courts must at a minimum meet standards corresponding to "Intermediate mid" as defined under the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages guidelines. (See Appendix F.) The existing Oral Proficiency Exam available through the Judicial Council's Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit may be used by courts to establish foreign-language proficiency of staff. Courts should not rely on self-evaluation by bilingual staff in determining their language proficiency. (Phase 1)

48. Beyond the specified minimum, the Judicial Council staff will work with the courts to (a) identify standards of language proficiency for specific points of public contact within the courthouse, and (b) develop and implement an online training for bilingual staff. (Phase 1)
49. The Judicial Council staff will work with educational providers, community-based organizations, and interpreter organizations to identify recruitment strategies, including consideration of market conditions, to encourage bilingual individuals to pursue the interpreting profession or employment opportunities in the courts as bilingual staff. (Phase 2)

Goal 6: Provide Judicial Branch Training on Language Access Policies and Procedures

Goal Statement

Judicial officers, court administrators, and court staff will receive training on language access policies, procedures, and standards, so they can respond consistently and effectively to the needs of LEP court users, while providing culturally competent language access services.

Issue Description

Throughout the planning process—from input during listening sessions to oral and written comments during the public hearings—stakeholders reiterated their concerns about the need for appropriate training of court staff and judicial officers. Judges and court administrators expressed concern with respect to their own lack of training in how to determine whether a noncertified or nonregistered interpreter is capable of providing competent language access services. Legal services providers reported a lack of knowledge on the part of court staff regarding more specialized language needs, such as an awareness of the diversity of languages spoken within a given county, the varieties of indigenous languages, and tools for identifying the preferred language for an LEP court user. There were also inconsistencies in the method for provisionally qualifying noncertified or nonregistered interpreters, and in the awareness of when, if ever, it is appropriate to ask attorneys or advocates to interpret for their clients. Finally, advocates expressed concern over the courts' referrals of LEP parties to court-appointed professionals who may or may not be linguistically accessible or culturally

competent. (Recommendation 33 above provides mechanisms to ensure courts contract with providers who provide services accessible to and by LEP persons.)

Interpreters expressed concerns about a general misunderstanding among court staff, judicial officers, and even other participants in the court process (including attorneys) of the interpreter's role and ethical constraints. Similarly, interpreters described a lack of awareness of the highly specialized skills required for court interpreting, the mental and physical toll of interpreting for periods longer than 30 minutes, the challenges fast-paced, crowded courtrooms pose for the interpreter, and ways to improve communication and courtroom management to optimize the task of an interpreter.

Language access stakeholders also expressed concern that court staff may not be aware of language access policies for their courts, an issue amplified by the lack of consistency among and even within courts. The absence or perceived absence of clear guidelines at the local and state level can cause confusion for court administrators and staff, thus highlighting the critical need for ongoing trainings on existing policies and on the statewide policies to be established after adoption of this Language Access Plan. Training on policies must also include information and tools for court staff and judicial officers that can be used to identify an individual's need for language services and properly documenting the language services need, even when unable to provide the services.

Any training for court staff and judicial officers should address, as well, the challenges faced by court interpreters when performing their jobs. Courtroom personnel and bench officers must understand the importance of effective courtroom management, the need to control the speed of the proceeding, the interpreter's ethical obligations to assess and report impediments to his or her performance, and the mental toll that interpreting takes on even the most qualified and seasoned interpreter.

Recommendations:

50. Judicial officers, including temporary judges, court administrators, and court staff will receive training regarding the judicial branch's language access policies and requirements as delineated in this Language Access Plan, as well as the policies and procedures of their individual courts. Courts should schedule additional training when policies are updated or changed. These trainings should include:

- Optimal methods for managing court proceedings involving interpreters, including an understanding of the mental exertion and concentration required for interpreting, the challenges of interpreter fatigue, the need to control rapid rates of speech and dialogue, and consideration of team interpreting where appropriate;
- The interpreter's ethical duty to clarify issues during interpretation and to report impediments to performance;
- Required procedures for the appointment and use of a provisionally qualified interpreter and for an LEP court user's waiver, if requested, of interpreter services;

- Legal requirements for establishing, on the record⁴⁰, an interpreter’s credentials;
- Available technologies and minimum technical and operational standards for providing remote interpreting; and
- Working with LEP court users in a culturally competent manner.

The staff of the Judicial Council will develop curricula for trainings, as well as resource manuals that address all training components, and distribute them to all courts for adaptation to local needs. (Phase 1)

51. Information on local and statewide language access resources, training and educational components identified throughout this plan, glossaries, signage, and other tools for providing language access should be readily available to all court staff through individual courts’ intranets. (Phases 2 and 3)

52. Judicial Council staff should develop bench cards that summarize salient language access policies and procedures and available resources to assist bench officers in addressing language issues that arise in the courtroom, including policies related to remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

⁴⁰ See footnote 31 above.

Goal 7: Conduct Outreach to Communities Regarding Language Access Services

Goal Statement

The Judicial Council and the courts will undertake comprehensive outreach to, and engage in partnership with, LEP communities and the organizations that serve them.

Issue Description

The role of courts is to serve their communities by providing a process for resolving disputes. Educating the community about court services is one of the ways by which the courts instill trust and confidence in the legal system. As legal services providers and LEP participants commented during the three public hearings, many LEP individuals do not come to the courthouse for legal help because they mistrust courts, misunderstand the role of the court system, and lack knowledge of their legal rights and what the court can do for them. They also believe, often for good reason, that they will not be able to communicate effectively in their language.

Engaging the community through outreach is critical to establishing the legitimacy of the court system and creating respect for the institution—and by extension—for the orders and decisions it makes. This must include outreach to LEP communities to explain that the court is there to serve them and is linguistically accessible to them. Additionally, ongoing outreach efforts, at both the state and local levels, provide the best means for securing community input on

language access needs. Establishing mechanisms to receive community feedback regarding the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of the court's language access services is a key component to ensuring community trust and quality control of the court's services. (Goal 8 addresses complaint mechanisms and related systems to manage and oversee language access policies at the state and local levels.)

These outreach efforts must be multifaceted. Courts can leverage existing community resources to notify their constituents of language access services as well as court services as a whole. To do this, courts can ensure information and notices are disseminated to community-based organizations, legal services providers, bar associations, and others and can use ethnic media and local news sources in outreach efforts. Outreach may also include the use of multi-lingual audiovisual tools to provide general information about language access services, court procedures, and available resources, such as self-help centers. Video and audio technologies are efficient and effective ways to reach potential LEP court users at large.

The oral and written comments submitted to the working group emphasized the need for collaboration and partnerships. Closely working with community-based organizations and providers, such as social services, legal services providers, faith-based organizations, job training programs, adult school programs, and elementary, middle, and high schools, is the most effective way for courts to reach LEP populations that have traditionally avoided the courts. These collaborative efforts can also help courts identify community needs and community resources and can help courts improve the quality of their language access services

and their responsiveness to their communities. They can also help courts target more isolated LEP communities that are not normally reached through more traditional outreach mechanisms. Justice partners and community-based organizations can help distribute information, educate the public, and even provide community space and language access for court-community events and informational and educational clinics about court services such as self-help centers or alternative dispute resolution programs.

As was discussed in Goal 5, outreach can also be effective in any effort to develop a pipeline of language access providers. Courts, in their outreach to community-based organizations and educational institutions, can engage bilingual community members by (a) offering potential employment opportunities and a meaningful chance to help their communities, (b) providing opportunities for participation in the court as trained volunteers to learn about the justice system and to gain experience and job skills, and (c) encouraging these community members to invest the time and resources required to study and prepare to become a certified or registered court interpreter. (Goal 5 provides a specific recommendation for these collaborations to increase the pool of qualified language access providers throughout the court system.)

Recommendations:

53. Courts should strengthen existing relationships and create new relationships with local community-based organizations, including social services providers, legal services organizations, government agencies, and minority bar associations to gather feedback to improve court services for LEP court users and disseminate court information and education throughout the community. (Phase 3)

54. To maximize both access and efficiency, multilingual audio and/or video recordings should be used as part of the outreach efforts by courts to provide important general information and answers to frequently asked questions. (Phase 3)
55. Courts should collaborate with local media and leverage the resources of media outlets, including ethnic media that communicate with their consumers in their language, as a means of disseminating information throughout the community about language access services, the court process, and available court resources. (Phase 3)

Goal 8: Identify Systems, Funding, and Legislation Necessary for Plan Implementation and Language Access Management

Goal Statement

In order to complete the systematic expansion of language access services, the Judicial Council will (1) secure adequate funding that does not result in a reduction of other court services; (2) propose appropriate changes to the law, both statutory amendments and changes to the rules of court; and (3) develop systems for implementing the Language Access Plan, for monitoring the provision of language access services, and for maintaining the highest quality of language services.

a. Increased Funding

Issue Description

As was discussed at the outset of this plan, the California judicial branch has seen significant funding cutbacks in past years forcing courts to close courtrooms and courthouses, cut hours of operations, lay off staff, and decrease or eliminate services altogether. Although this year a small amount of funding was restored, it was partially offset by the imposition of other financial obligations on the branch and a reduction in court revenues. Accordingly, courts throughout the state still struggle to meet their court users' most basic needs. For example, the presiding judge of Riverside County reported that residents of Needles—many of whom are low income, LEP individuals—must now travel 200 miles to reach the nearest courthouse. It is therefore imperative that there be increased funding for the judicial branch, and that any funding

provided by the Legislature for increasing language access not be at the expense of other branch funding. Basic, ongoing funding from the Legislature is essential and critical for effective implementation of the Language Access Plan.

However, there are other opportunities for funding for individual courts, in particular for projects designed to address the needs of low-income or LEP communities, especially in the areas of domestic violence and elder or dependent adult abuse. Some grant possibilities in recent years have included funding for innovative initiatives to use technology to expand access to the judicial system, partnership grants with legal services providers funded by the Equal Access Fund, pilot projects addressing particular needs of a court's communities, and State Bar grants for one-time discrete projects. Grant funding may have limitations since it often provides resources for one-time projects or needs, and may not be available for ongoing operational costs necessary to keep a project running beyond the original grant period. However, grant funding can also be an important resource for certain projects in the expansion of language access and the Judicial Council should support efforts at the local level to apply for relevant funding opportunities.

Recommendations:

56. The judicial branch will advocate for sufficient funding to provide comprehensive language access services. The funding requests should reflect the incremental phasing-in of the Language Access Plan, and should seek to ensure that requests do not jeopardize funding for other court services or operations. (Phase 1)

57. Funding requests for comprehensive language access services should be premised on the best available data that identifies the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of this Language Access Plan. This may include information being gathered in connection with the recent Judicial Council decision to expand the use of Program 45.45 funds for civil cases where parties are indigent;⁴¹ information being gathered for the 2015 Language Need and Interpreter Use Report; and information that can be extrapolated from the Resource Assessment Study (which looks at court staff workload), as well as other court records (e.g., self-help center records regarding LEP court users). (Phase 1)
58. Judicial Council staff will pursue appropriate funding opportunities from federal, state, or nonprofit entities, such as the National Center for State Courts, which are particularly suitable for one-time projects, for example, translation of documents or production of videos. (Phase 1)
59. Courts should pursue appropriate funding opportunities at the national, state, or local level to support the provision of language access services. Courts should seek, for example, one-time or ongoing grants from public interest foundations, state or local bar associations, and federal, state, or local governments. (Phase 1)

⁴¹ The Legislature provides funding for interpreter services to the courts in a special item of the judicial branch budget (Program 45.45 of the Trial Court Trust Fund). At its public meeting on January 23, 2014, the Judicial Council approved recommendations that authorize reimbursement from Program 45.45 to include costs for all appearances in domestic violence cases, family law cases in which there is a domestic violence issue, and elder abuse cases, as well as interpreters for indigent parties in civil cases. At its public meeting on December 12, 2014, the council modified the action, approving expenditure of these funds consistent with the priorities and preferences set forth in AB 1657.

b. Language Access Plan Management

Issue Description

Stakeholders participating throughout the planning process agreed that, in order to ensure the success of a statewide language access plan, it is necessary to create systems for implementing the plan, for compliance and monitoring its effects on language access statewide, and for tracking the need for ongoing adjustments and improvements. Participants in the court system, from legal services providers to interpreters to court users themselves, emphasized the need for quality control measures, including mechanisms for making and resolving complaints about all aspects of the courts' language access services.

The Judicial Council's Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit and the statewide Language Access Coordinator will be instrumental in providing centralized management of the Language Access Plan and in being available as a resource to local courts needing technical assistance or support to implement the provisions of this Language Access Plan as well as develop local procedures and policies. CLASP, in conjunction with other Judicial Council staff working on language access issues, can coordinate the sharing of existing language access materials developed by providers and courts throughout the state and nationally, and can coordinate efforts for developing further statewide materials (which local courts can then adapt to their unique needs). Because LEP court users may have language access needs for appellate matters (for example, needing assistance at the counter or understanding forms or procedures), this plan also recommends that the California Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court of California discuss and adopt applicable parts of the plan with necessary modifications.

A multifaceted complaint procedure is also essential to ensure the quality of the language access services delivered. Development of such a procedure must include, among other considerations, conferring with union representatives and impacted service providers to ensure the creation of a complaint system that will be respected by all who either provide or receive services. All participants in the court system, including LEP court users, attorneys, legal services providers, community-based organizations, interpreters, judicial officers, and other justice partners, must be able to register complaints if a court fails to provide adequate language access services, or if the services provided are of poor quality, whether the service involves bilingual staff, written translation, or interpreter employees or contractors. Any complaint procedure must be available to all, consistent and transparent, with procedures and forms, and should be utilized in a way that protects LEP court users or other interested persons from actual or perceived negative repercussions either to them personally or to the outcome of their case.

Complainants should be able to file their complaints confidentially, and advocates and attorneys should be allowed to register complaints or concerns on behalf of their LEP clients. Similarly, court staff, administrators, judges, subordinate judicial officers, and interpreters must be able to file a complaint regarding serious problems or concerns with the quality of interpretation provided by a given interpreter (whether this interpreter is a court employee, independent contractor, certified, registered, or provisionally qualified).

The confidentiality of complaint processes should be broadly communicated to all court users. In addition, information about the complaint process and any forms should be available in English and up to 5 other languages, based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. Where not available in a certain language, the court should ensure the availability of bilingual staff or an interpreter to assist the LEP court user in completing the complaint form and to explain the written procedures.

Recommendations:

60. The Judicial Council will create a Language Access Implementation Task Force (name TBD) to develop an implementation plan for presentation to the council. The Implementation Task Force membership should include representatives of the key stakeholders in the provision of language access services in the courts, including, but not limited to, judicial officers, court administrators, court interpreters, legal services providers, and attorneys that commonly work with LEP court users. As part of its charge, the task force will identify the costs associated with implementing the LAP recommendations. The Implementation Task Force will coordinate with related advisory groups and Judicial Council staff on implementation, and will have the flexibility to monitor and adjust implementation plans based on feasibility and available resources. (Phase 1)
61. The Implementation Task Force will establish the necessary systems for monitoring compliance with this Language Access Plan. This will include oversight of the plan's

effects on language access statewide and at the individual court level, and assessing the need for ongoing adjustments and improvements to the plan. (Phase 1)

62. The Implementation Task Force will develop a single form, available statewide, on which to register a complaint about the provision of, or the failure to provide, language access. This form should be as simple, streamlined, and user-friendly as possible. The form will be available in both hard copy at the courthouse and online, and will be capable of being completed electronically or downloaded for printing and completion in writing. The complaints will also serve as a mechanism to monitor concerns related to language access at the local or statewide level. The form should be used as part of multiple processes identified in the following recommendations of this plan. (Phase 1)

63. Individual courts will develop a process by which LEP court users, their advocates and attorneys, or other interested persons may file a complaint about the court's provision of, or failure to provide, appropriate language access services, including issues related to locally produced translations. Local courts may choose to model their local procedures after those developed as part of the implementation process. Complaints must be filed with the court at issue and reported to the Judicial Council to assist in the ongoing monitoring of the overall implementation and success of the Language Access Plan. (Phase 1)

64. The Judicial Council, together with stakeholders, will develop a process by which the quality and accuracy of an interpreter's skills and adherence to ethical

requirements can be reviewed. This process will allow for appropriate remedial action, where required, to ensure certified and registered interpreters meet all qualification standards. Development of the process should include determination of whether California Rule of Court 2.891 (regarding periodic review of court interpreter skills and professional conduct) should be amended, repealed, or remain in place. Once the review process is created, information regarding how it can be initiated must be clearly communicated to court staff, judicial officers, attorneys, and in plain language to court users (e.g., LEP persons and justice partners). (Phase 2)

65. The translation committee (as described in Recommendation 36 above), in consultation with the Implementation Task Force, will develop a process to address complaints about the quality of Judicial Council–approved translations, including translation of Judicial Council forms, the California Courts Online Self-Help Center, and other Judicial Council–issued publications and information. (Phase 3)

66. The Judicial Council should create a statewide repository of language access resources, whether existing or to be developed, that includes translated materials, audiovisual tools, and other materials identified in this plan in order to assist courts in efforts to expand language access. (Phase 1)

67. The California Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of California should discuss and adopt applicable parts of this Language Access Plan with necessary modifications. (Phase 1)

c. Necessary Court Rules, Forms, and Legislation for Plan Implementation

Issue Description

Legislative action to amend, delete, or add statutory language, and Judicial Council action to create or revise court forms or rules of court, will be necessary to fully and effectively implement the recommendations contained in this Language Access Plan. Such actions should include clarification of existing statutes, the amendment of the existing rule of court for provisional qualification of interpreters in civil cases, and the development of a policy for an LEP court user's ability to request a waiver of interpreter services.

During the public hearings and listening sessions, court administrators described the difficulties that certain aspects of the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act pose for courts in their efforts to efficiently schedule interpreters. Of particular concern was Government Code section 71802, which limits individual courts from using a particular independent contractor more than 100 days per calendar year, and also requires that courts offer independent contractors who have been appointed more than 45 court days in the same year the opportunity to apply for employment. Court administrators expressed concern that adding additional civil case types that require an interpreter will cause courts to reach the 100-day limit for individual independent court interpreter contractors more quickly, making them unavailable to meet the court's future needs within that year, while also forcing independent contractors to accept opportunities in counties outside their geographic area of choice. Administrators also raised concerns about the inefficiencies of requiring that interpreter coordinators be certified or registered interpreters to be funded from interpreter funding,

which then limits the time that the credentialed coordinator can provide interpreting services. Where interpreter resources are tight, the policy of using a credentialed interpreter for administrative tasks, thus removing him or her from the courtroom, should be revisited.

In addition to the recommendations listed below, the Joint Working Group recognizes that additional rules, statute, or form changes may be necessary to implement the recommendations contained in this plan.

Recommendations:

68. To ensure ongoing and effective implementation of the LAP, the Implementation Task Force will evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the need for new statutes or rules or modifications of existing rules and statutes. (Phases 2 and 3)
69. The Judicial Council should establish procedures and guidelines for determining “good cause” to appoint non-credentialed court interpreters in civil matters. (Phase 1)
70. The Judicial Council should amend rule of court 2.893 to address the appointment of non-credentialed interpreters in civil proceedings. (Phase 1)
71. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Government Code section 68560.5(a) to include small claims proceedings in the definition of court proceedings for which qualified interpreters must be provided. (Phase 2)
72. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Code of Civil Procedure section 116.550 dealing with small claims actions to reflect that interpreters in

small claims cases should, as with other matters, be certified or registered, or provisionally qualified where a credentialed interpreter is not available. (Phase 2)

73. The Judicial Council should update the interpreter-related court forms (INT-100-INFO, INT-110, INT-120, and INT-200) as necessary to be consistent with this plan. (Phase 2)

74. The Implementation Task Force should evaluate existing law, including a study of any negative impacts of the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act on the provision of appropriate language access services. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, whether any modifications should be proposed for existing requirements and limitations on hiring independent contractors beyond a specified number of days. (Phase 2)

75. The Implementation Task Force will develop a policy addressing an LEP court user's request of a waiver of the services of an interpreter. The policy will identify standards to ensure that any waiver is knowing, intelligent, and voluntary; is made after the person has consulted with counsel; and is approved by the appropriate judicial officer, exercising his or her discretion. The policy will address any other factors necessary to ensure the waiver is appropriate, including: determining whether an interpreter is necessary to ensure the waiver is made knowingly; ensuring that the waiver is entered on the record,⁴² or in writing if there is no official record of the proceedings; and requiring that a party may request at any time, or the court may make on its own motion, an order vacating the waiver and

⁴² See footnote 31 above.

appointing an interpreter for all further proceedings. The policy shall reflect the expectation that waivers will rarely be invoked in light of access to free interpreter services and the Implementation Task Force will track waiver usage to assist in identifying any necessary changes to policy. (Phase 1)

Appendix A: Phase-In of Recommendations

PHASE 1: These recommendations are urgent or should already be in place. Implementation of these recommendations should begin in year 1 (2015).

#1 Language access needs identification. Courts will identify the language access needs for each LEP court user, including parties, witnesses, or other persons with a significant interest, at the earliest possible point of contact with the LEP person. The language needs will be clearly and consistently documented in the case management system and/or any other case record or file, as appropriate given a court's existing case information record system, and this capability should be included in any future system upgrades or system development. (Phase 1)

#2 Requests for language services. A court's provision or denial of language services must be tracked in the court's case information system, however appropriate given a court's capabilities. Where current tracking of provision or denial is not possible, courts must make reasonable efforts to modify or update their systems to capture relevant data as soon as feasible. (Phases 1, 2)

#3 Protocol for justice partners to communicate language needs. Courts should establish protocols by which justice partners can indicate to the court that an individual requires a spoken language interpreter at the earliest possible point of contact with the court system. (Phase 1)

#4 Mechanisms for LEP court users to self-identify. Courts will establish mechanisms that invite LEP persons to self-identify as needing language access services upon contact with any part of the court system (using, for example, "I speak" cards [see page 56 for a sample card]). In the absence of self-identification, judicial officers and court staff must proactively seek to ascertain a court user's language needs. (Phase 1)

#5 Information for court users about availability of language access services. Courts will inform court users about the availability of language access services at the earliest points of contact between court users and the court. The notice must include, where accurate and appropriate, that language access services are free. Courts should take into account that the need for language access services may occur earlier or later in the court process, so information about language services must be available throughout the duration of a case. Notices should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. Notice must be provided to the public, justice partners, legal services agencies, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. (Phase 1)

#6 Expansion of language services cost reporting. The Judicial Council and the courts will continue to expand and improve data collection on interpreter services, and expand language services cost reporting to include amounts spent on other language access services and tools

such as translations, interpreter or language services coordination, bilingual pay differential for staff, and multilingual signage or technologies. This information is critical in supporting funding requests as the courts expand language access services into civil cases. (Phase 1)

#8 Expansion of court interpreters to all civil proceedings. Qualified interpreters must be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all court proceedings, including civil proceedings as prioritized in Evidence Code section 756 (see Appendix H), and including Family Court Services mediation. (Phases 1 and 2)

#9 Provisional qualification requirements. Pending amendment of California Rules of Court, rule 2.893, when good cause exists, a noncertified or nonregistered court interpreter may be appointed in a court proceeding in any matter, civil or criminal, only after he or she is determined to be qualified by following the procedures for provisional qualification. These procedures are currently set forth, for criminal and juvenile delinquency matters, in rule 2.893 (and, for civil matters, will be set forth once the existing rule of court is amended). (See Recommendation 50, on training for judicial officers and court staff regarding the provisional qualification procedures, and Recommendation 70, on amending rule 2.893 to include civil cases.) (Phases 1 and 2)

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings. Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#12 Preference for in-person interpreters. The use of in-person, certified and registered court interpreters is preferred for court proceedings, but courts may consider the use of remote interpreting where it is appropriate for a particular event. Remote interpreting may only be used if it will allow LEP court-users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings. (Phase 1)

#13 Remote interpreting in the courtroom. When using remote interpreting in the courtroom, the court must satisfy, to the extent feasible, the prerequisites, considerations and guidelines for remote interpreting set forth in Appendix B. (Phase 1)

#14 Remote interpreting minimum technology requirements. The Implementation Task Force will establish minimum technology requirements for remote interpreting which will be updated on an ongoing basis and which will include minimum requirements for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. (Phase 1)

#15 Use of video for remote interpreting. Courts using remote interpreting should strive to provide video, used in conjunction with enhanced audio equipment, for courtroom interpretations, rather than relying on telephonic interpreting. (Phase 1)

#16 Pilot for video remote interpreting. The Judicial Council should conduct a pilot project, in alignment with the Judicial Branch’s Tactical Plan for Technology 2014–2016. This pilot should, to the extent possible, collect relevant data on: due process issues, participant satisfaction, whether remote interpreting increases the use of certified and registered interpreters as opposed to provisionally qualified interpreters, the effectiveness of a variety of available technologies (for both consecutive and simultaneous interpretation), and a cost-benefit analysis. The Judicial Council should make clear that this pilot project would not preclude or prevent any court from proceeding on its own to deploy remote interpreting, so long as it allows LEP court users to fully and meaningfully participate in the proceedings. (Phase 1)

#18 Creation of multilingual standardized videos. The Judicial Council should continue to create multilingual standardized videos for high-volume case types that lend themselves to generalized, not localized, legal information, and provide them to courts in the state’s top eight languages and captioned in other languages. (Phase 1)

#19 Verifying credentials of interpreters. Effective January 2015, pursuant to Government Code section 68561 (g) and (f), judicial officers, in conjunction with court administrative personnel, must ensure that the interpreters being appointed are qualified, properly represent their credentials on the record, and have filed with the court their interpreter oaths. (See Recommendation 50, which discusses training of judicial officers and court staff on these subjects.) (Phase 1)

#22 Avoiding conflicts of interest. Absent exigent circumstances, when appointing a noncertified, nonregistered interpreter, courts must not appoint persons with a conflict of interest conflict of interest or bias with respect to the matter. (Phase 1)

#23 Appointment of minors to interpret. Minors will not be appointed to interpret in courtroom proceedings nor court-ordered and court-operated activities. (Phase 1)

#25 Designation of language access office or representative. The court in each county will designate an office or person that serves as a language access resource for all court users, as well as court staff and judicial officers. This person or persons should be able to: describe all the services the court provides and what services it does not provide, access and disseminate all of the court’s multilingual written information as requested, and help LEP court users and court staff locate court language access resources. (Phase 1)

#26 Identification of critical points of contact. Courts should identify which points of contact are most critical for LEP court users, and, whenever possible, should place qualified bilingual staff at these locations. (See Recommendation 47, which discusses possible standards for the appropriate qualification level of bilingual staff at these locations.) (Phase 1)

#28 Recruitment of bilingual staff. Courts should strive to recruit bilingual staff fluent in the languages most common in that county. In order to increase the bilingual applicant pool, courts should conduct outreach to educational providers in the community, such as local high schools,

community colleges, and universities, to promote the career opportunities available to bilingual individuals in the courts. (Phase 1)

#34 Use of bilingual volunteers. Courts should consider the use of bilingual volunteers to provide language access services at points of contact other than court proceedings, where appropriate. Bilingual volunteers and interns must be properly trained and supervised. (Phase 1)

#36 Establishment of translation committee. The Judicial Council will create a translation committee to develop and formalize a translation protocol for Judicial Council translations of forms, written materials, and audiovisual tools. The committee should collaborate with interpreter organizations and courts to develop a legal glossary in all certified languages, taking into account regional differences, to maintain consistency in the translation of legal terms. The committee's responsibilities will also include identifying qualifications for translators, and the prioritization, coordination, and oversight of the translation of materials. The qualification of translators should include a requirement to have a court or legal specialization and be accredited by the American Translators Association (ATA), or to have been determined qualified to provide the translations based on experience, education, and references. Once the Judicial Council's translation protocol is established, individual courts should establish similar quality control and translation procedures for local forms, informational materials, recordings, and videos aimed at providing information to the public. Local court website information should use similarly qualified translators. Courts are encouraged to partner with local community organizations to accomplish this recommendation. (Phase 1)

#37 Statewide and multilingual samples and templates. The Judicial Council staff will work with courts to provide samples and templates of multilingual information for court users that are applicable on a statewide basis and adaptable for local use. (Phase 1)

#38 Posting of translations on web. The Judicial Council's staff will post on the California Courts website written translations of forms and informational and educational materials for the public as they become available and will send notice to the courts of their availability so that courts can link to these postings from their own websites. (Phase 1)

#40 Translation of court orders. Courts will provide sight translation of court orders and should consider providing written translations of those orders to LEP persons when needed. At a minimum, courts should provide the translated version of the relevant Judicial Council form to help litigants compare their specific court order to the translated template form. (Phase 1)

#43 Standards for qualifications of interpreters. Courts, the Judicial Council, and the Court Interpreters Advisory Panel (CIAP) will ensure that all interpreters providing language access services to limited English proficient court users are qualified and competent. Existing standards for qualifications should remain in effect and will be reviewed regularly by the CIAP. (Phase 1)

#44 Online orientation for new interpreters. The online statewide orientation program will continue to be available to facilitate orientation training for new interpreters working in the courts. (Phase 1)

#45 Training for prospective interpreters. The Judicial Council and the courts should work with interpreter organizations and educational providers (including the California community college and state university systems) to examine ways to better prepare prospective interpreters to pass the credentialing examination. These efforts should include:

- Partnering to develop possible exam preparation courses and tests, and
- Creating internship and mentorship opportunities in the courts and in related legal settings (such as work with legal services providers or other legal professionals) to help train and prepare prospective interpreters in all legal areas.

(Phase 1)

#46 Training for interpreters on civil cases and remote interpreting. The Judicial Council, interpreter organizations, and educational groups should collaborate to create training programs for those who will be interpreting in civil cases and those who will be providing remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

#47 Language proficiency standards for bilingual staff. Courts must ensure that bilingual staff providing information to LEP court users are proficient in the languages in which they communicate. All staff designated as bilingual staff by courts must at a minimum meet standards corresponding to "Intermediate mid" as defined under the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages guidelines. (See Appendix F.) The existing Oral Proficiency Exam available through the Judicial Council's Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP) unit may be used by courts to establish foreign-language proficiency of staff. Courts should not rely on self-evaluation by bilingual staff in determining their language proficiency. (Phase 1)

#48 Standards and online training for bilingual staff. Beyond the specified minimum, the Judicial Council staff will work with the courts to (a) identify standards of language proficiency for specific points of public contact within the courthouse, and (b) develop and implement an online training for bilingual staff. (Phase 1)

#50 Judicial branch training regarding Language Access Plan. Judicial officers, including temporary judges, court administrators, and court staff will receive training regarding the judicial branch's language access policies and requirements as delineated in this Language Access Plan, as well as the policies and procedures of their individual courts. Courts should schedule additional training when policies are updated or changed. These trainings should include:

- Optimal methods for managing court proceedings involving interpreters, including an understanding of the mental exertion and concentration required for interpreting, the challenges of interpreter fatigue, the need to control rapid rates of speech and dialogue, and consideration of team interpreting where appropriate;

- The interpreter’s ethical duty to clarify issues during interpretation and to report impediments to performance;
- Required procedures for the appointment and use of a provisionally qualified interpreter and for an LEP court user’s waiver, if requested, of interpreter services;
- Legal requirements for establishing, on the record, an interpreter’s credentials;
- Available technologies and minimum technical and operational standards for providing remote interpreting; and
- Working with LEP court users in a culturally competent manner.

The staff of the Judicial Council will develop curricula for trainings, as well as resource manuals that address all training components, and distribute them to all courts for adaptation to local needs. (Phase 1)

#52. Benchcards on language access. Judicial Council staff should develop bench cards that summarize salient language access policies and procedures and available resources to assist bench officers in addressing language issues that arise in the courtroom, including policies related to remote interpreting. (Phase 1)

#56 Advocacy for sufficient funding. The judicial branch will advocate for sufficient funding to provide comprehensive language access services. The funding requests should reflect the incremental phasing-in of the Language Access Plan, and should seek to ensure that requests do not jeopardize funding for other court services or operations. (Phase 1)

#57 Use of data for funding requests. Funding requests for comprehensive language access services should be premised on the best available data that identifies the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of this Language Access Plan. This may include information being gathered in connection with the recent Judicial Council decision to expand the use of Program 45.45 funds for civil cases where parties are indigent; information being gathered for the 2015 Language Need and Interpreter Use Report; and information that can be extrapolated from the Resource Assessment Study (which looks at court staff workload), as well as other court records (e.g., self-help center records regarding LEP court users). (Phase 1)

#58 Pursuit by the Judicial Council of other funding opportunities. Judicial Council staff will pursue appropriate funding opportunities from federal, state, or nonprofit entities such as the National Center for State Courts, which are particularly suitable for one-time projects, for example, translation of documents or production of videos. (Phase 1)

#59 Pursuit by courts of other funding opportunities. Courts should pursue appropriate funding opportunities at the national, state, or local level to support the provision of language access services. Courts should seek, for example, one-time or ongoing grants from public interest foundations, state or local bar associations, federal, state, or local governments, and others. (Phase 1)

#60 Language Access Implementation Task Force. The Judicial Council will create a Language Access Implementation Task Force (name TBD) to develop an implementation plan for

presentation to the council. The Implementation Task Force membership should include representatives of the key stakeholders in the provision of language access services in the courts, including, but not limited to, judicial officers, court administrators, court interpreters, legal services providers, and attorneys that commonly work with LEP court users. As part of its charge, the task force will identify the costs associated with implementing the LAP recommendations. The Implementation Task Force will coordinate with related advisory groups and Judicial Council staff on implementation, and will have the flexibility to monitor and adjust implementation plans based on feasibility and available resources. (Phase 1)

#61 Compliance and monitoring system. The Implementation Task Force will monitor compliance monitoring with this Language Access Plan. This will include oversight of the plan's effects on language access statewide and at the individual court level, and assessing the need for ongoing adjustments and improvements to the plan. (Phase 1)

#62 Single complaint form. The Implementation Task Force will develop a single form, available statewide, on which to register a complaint about the provision of, or the failure to provide, language access. This form should be as simple, streamlined, and user-friendly as possible. The form will be available in both hard copy at the courthouse and online, and will be capable of being completed electronically or downloaded for printing and completion in writing. The complaints will also serve as a mechanism to monitor concerns related to language access at the local or statewide level. The form should be used as part of multiple processes identified in the following recommendations of this plan. (Phase 1)

#63 Complaints at local level regarding language access services. Individual courts will develop a process by which LEP court users, their advocates and attorneys, or other interested persons may file a complaint about the court's provision of, or failure to provide, appropriate language access services, including issues related to locally produced translations. Local courts may choose to model their local procedures after those developed as part of the implementation process. Complaints must be filed with the court at issue and reported to the Judicial Council to assist in the ongoing monitoring of the overall implementation and success of the Language Access Plan. (Phase 1)

#66 Statewide repository of language access resources. The Judicial Council should create a statewide repository of language access resources, whether existing or to be developed, that includes translated materials, audiovisual tools, and other materials identified in this plan in order to assist courts in efforts to expand language access. (Phase 1)

#67 Adoption of plan by the California Courts of Appeal and California Supreme Court. The California Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court of California should discuss and adopt applicable parts of this Language Access Plan with necessary modifications. (Phase 1)

#69 Procedures and guidelines for good cause. The Judicial Council should establish procedures and guidelines for determining "good cause" to appoint non-credentialed court interpreters in civil matters. (Phase 1)

#70 Amend rule of court for appointment of interpreters in civil proceedings. The Judicial Council should amend rule of court 2.893 to address the appointment of non-credentialed interpreters in civil proceedings. (Phase 1)

#75 Policy regarding waiver of interpreter. The Implementation Task Force will develop a policy addressing an LEP court user's request of a waiver of the services of an interpreter. The policy will identify standards to ensure that any waiver is knowing, intelligent, and voluntary; is made after the person has consulted with counsel; and is approved by the appropriate judicial officer, exercising his or her discretion. The policy will address any other factors necessary to ensure the waiver is appropriate, including: determining whether an interpreter is necessary to ensure the waiver is made knowingly; ensuring that the waiver is entered on the record,⁴³ or in writing if there is no official record of the proceedings; and requiring that a party may request at any time, or the court may make on its own motion, an order vacating the waiver and appointing an interpreter for all further proceedings. The policy shall reflect the expectation that waivers will rarely be invoked in light of access to free interpreter services and the Implementation Task Force will track waiver usage to assist in identifying any necessary changes to policy. (Phase 1)

PHASE 2: These recommendations are critical, but less urgent or may require completion of Phase 1 tasks. Implementation of these recommendations may begin immediately, where practicable, and in any event should begin by years 2–3 (2016–2017).

#2 Requests for language services. A court's provision or denial of language services must be tracked in the court's case information system, however appropriate given a court's capabilities. Where current tracking of provision or denial is not possible, courts must make reasonable efforts to modify or update their systems to capture relevant data as soon as feasible. (Phases 1, 2)

#7 Review of other data beyond the U.S. Census. The Judicial Council and the courts should collect data in order to anticipate the numbers and languages of likely LEP court users. Whenever data is collected, including for these purposes, the courts and the Judicial Council should look at other sources of data beyond the U.S. Census, such as school systems, health departments, county social services, and local community-based agencies. (Phase 2)

#8 Expansion of court interpreters to all civil proceedings. Qualified interpreters must be provided in the California courts to LEP court users in all court proceedings, including civil proceedings as prioritized in Evidence Code section 756 (see Appendix H), and including Family Court Services mediation. (Phases 1 and 2)

#9 Provisional qualification requirements. Pending amendment of California Rules of Court, rule 2.893, when good cause exists, a noncertified or nonregistered court interpreter may be

⁴³ See footnote 31 above.

appointed in a court proceeding in any matter, civil or criminal, only after he or she is determined to be qualified by following the procedures for provisional qualification. These procedures are currently set forth, for criminal and juvenile delinquency matters, in rule 2.893 (and, for civil matters, will be set forth once the existing rule of court is amended). (See Recommendation 50, on training for judicial officers and court staff regarding the provisional qualification procedures, and Recommendation 70, on amending rule 2.893 to include civil cases.) (Phases 1 and 2)

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings.

Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#11 Consideration of language accessibility of service providers in making court orders. An LEP individual should not be ordered to participate in a court ordered program if that program does not provide appropriate language accessible services. If a judicial officer does not order participation in services due to the program's lack of language capacity, the court should order the litigant to participate in an appropriate alternative program that provides language access services for the LEP court user. In making its findings and orders, the court should inquire if the program provides language access services to ensure the LEP court user's ability to meet the requirements of the court. (Phase 2)

#17 Pilot for central pool of remote interpreters. In order to maximize the use and availability of California's highly skilled certified and registered interpreters, the Judicial Council should consider creating a pilot program through which certified and registered interpreters would be available to all courts on a short-notice basis to provide remote interpreting services. (Phase 2)

#20 Expansion of regional coordination system. The Judicial Council should expand the existing formal regional coordination system to improve efficiencies in interpreter scheduling for court proceedings and cross-assignments between courts throughout the state. (See Recommendation 30, addressing coordination for bilingual staff and interpreters for non-courtroom events.) (Phase 2)

#21 Methods for calendaring and coordination of court interpreters. Courts should continue to develop methods for using interpreters more efficiently and effectively, including but not limited to calendar coordination. Courts should develop these systems in a way that does not have a chilling effect on LEP court users' access to court services. (Phase 2)

#24 Appointment of bilingual staff. Absent exigent circumstances, courts should avoid appointing bilingual court staff to interpret in courtroom proceedings; if the court does appoint staff, he or she must meet all of the provisional qualification requirements. (Phase 2)

#27 Provision of language access tools to court personnel. All court staff who engage with the public will have access to language assistance tools, such as translated materials and resources, multi-language glossaries and “I speak” cards, to determine a court user’s native language, direct him or her to the designated location for language services, and/or provide the LEP individual with brochures, instructions, or other information in the appropriate language. (Phase 2)

#29 Development of protocols for where bilingual staff are not available. Courts will develop written protocols or procedures to ensure LEP court users obtain adequate language access services where bilingual staff are not available. For example, the court’s interpreter coordinator could be on call to identify which interpreters or staff are available and appropriate to provide services in the clerk’s office or self-help center. Additionally, the use of remote technologies such as telephone access to bilingual staff persons in another location or remote interpreting could be instituted. (Phase 2)

#30 Policies that promote sharing of bilingual staff and interpreters among courts. The Judicial Council should consider adopting policies that promote sharing of bilingual staff and certified and registered court interpreters among courts, using remote technologies, for language assistance outside of court proceedings. (Phase 2)

#31 Pilot for remote assistance at counters and in self-help centers. The courts and the Judicial Council should consider a pilot to implement the use of remote interpreter services for counter help and at self-help centers, incorporating different solutions, including court-paid cloud-based fee-for-service models or a court/centralized bank of bilingual professionals. (Phase 2)

#32 Pilot for remote assistance for workshops. The courts should consider a pilot to implement inter-court, remote attendance at workshops, trainings, or “information nights” conducted in non-English languages using a variety of equipment, including telephone, video-conferencing (WebEx, Skype), or other technologies. (Phase 2)

#33 Qualifications of court-appointed professionals. In matters with LEP court users, courts must determine that court-appointed professionals, such as psychologists, mediators, and guardians, can provide linguistically accessible services before ordering or referring LEP court users to those professionals. Where no such language capability exists, courts should make reasonable efforts to identify or enter into contracts with providers able to offer such language capabilities, either as bilingual professionals who can provide the service directly in another language or via qualified interpreters. (Phase 2)

#39 Signage throughout courthouse. The staff of the Judicial Council should assist courts by providing plain-language translations of the most common and relevant signs likely to be used in a courthouse, and provide guidance on the use of internationally recognized icons, symbols, and displays to limit the need for text and, therefore, translation. Where more localized signage is required, courts should have all public signs in English and translated in up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and

information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 2)

#41 Accessible courthouses. The Judicial Council, partnering with courts, should ensure that new courthouse construction efforts, as well as redesign of existing courthouse space, are undertaken with consideration for making courthouses more easily navigable by all LEP persons. (Phase 2)

#42 Wayfinding strategies. The Judicial Council's staff will provide information to courts interested in better wayfinding strategies, multilingual (static and dynamic) signage, and other design strategies that focus on assisting LEP court users. (Phase 2)

#49 Recruitment strategies for language access providers. The Judicial Council staff will work with educational providers, community-based organizations, and interpreter organizations to identify recruitment strategies, including consideration of market conditions, to encourage bilingual individuals to pursue the interpreting profession or employment opportunities in the courts as bilingual staff. (Phase 2)

#51 Language access resources on intranet. Information on local and statewide language access resources, training and educational components identified throughout this plan, glossaries, signage, and other tools for providing language access should be readily available to all court staff through individual courts' intranets. (Phases 2 and 3)

#64. Complaints regarding court interpreters. The Judicial Council, together with stakeholders, will develop a process by which the quality and accuracy of an interpreter's skills and adherence to ethical requirements can be reviewed. This process will allow for appropriate remedial action, where required, to ensure certified and registered interpreters meet all qualification standards. Development of the process should include determination of whether California Rule of Court 2.891 (regarding periodic review of court interpreter skills and professional conduct) should be amended, repealed, or remain in place. Once the review process is created, information regarding how it can be initiated must be clearly communicated to court staff, judicial officers, attorneys, and in plain language to court users (e.g., LEP persons and justice partners). (Phase 2)

#68. Implementation Task Force to evaluate need for updates to rules and statutes. To ensure ongoing and effective implementation of the LAP, the Implementation Task Force will evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the need for new statutes or rules or modifications of existing rules and statutes. (Phases 2 and 3)

#71 Legislation to delete exception for small claims proceedings. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Government Code section 68560.5(a) to include small claims proceedings in the definition of court proceedings for which qualified interpreters must be provided. (Phase 2)

#72 Legislation to require credentialed interpreters for small claims. The Judicial Council should sponsor legislation to amend Code of Civil Procedure section 116.550 dealing with small claims actions to reflect that interpreters in small claims cases should, as with other matters, be certified or registered, or provisionally qualified where a credentialed interpreter is not available. (Phase 2)

#73 Updating of interpreter-related forms. The Judicial Council should update the interpreter-related court forms (INT-100-INFO, INT-110, INT-120, and INT-200) as necessary to be consistent with this plan. (Phase 2)

#74 Evaluation of Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act. The Implementation Task Force should evaluate existing law, including a study of any negative impacts of the Trial Court Interpreter Employment and Labor Relations Act on the provision of appropriate language access services. The evaluation should include, but not be limited to, whether any modifications should be proposed for existing requirements and limitations on hiring independent contractors beyond a specified number of days. (Phase 2)

PHASE 3: These recommendations are critical, but not urgent, or are complex and will require significant foundational steps, time, and resources to be completed by 2020. Implementation of these recommendations should begin immediately, where practicable, or immediately after the necessary foundational steps are in place.

#10 Provision of qualified interpreters in all court-ordered/court-operated proceedings. Beginning immediately, as resources are available, but in any event no later than 2020, courts will provide qualified court interpreters in all court-ordered, court-operated programs, services and events, to all LEP litigants, witnesses, and persons with a significant interest in the case. (Phases 1, 2, and 3)

#35 Pilot programs for language access kiosks. As an alternative for traditional information dissemination, the Judicial Council should consider creating pilot programs to implement the use of language access kiosks in lobbies or other public waiting areas to provide a variety of information electronically, such as on a computer or tablet platform. This information should be in English and up to five other languages based on local community needs assessed through collaboration with and information from justice partners, including legal services providers, community-based organizations, and other entities working with LEP populations. At a minimum, all such materials should be available in English and Spanish. (Phase 3)

#51 Language access resources on intranet. Information on local and statewide language access resources, training and educational components identified throughout this plan, glossaries, signage, and other tools for providing language access should be readily available to all court staff through individual courts' intranets. (Phases 2 and 3)

#53 Partnerships to disseminate information. Courts should strengthen existing relationships and create new relationships with local community-based organizations, including social services providers, legal services organizations, government agencies, and minority bar associations to gather feedback to improve court services for LEP court users and disseminate court information and education throughout the community. (Phase 3)

#54 Multilingual audio or video recordings to inform public. To maximize both access and efficiency, multilingual audio and/or video recordings should be used as part of the outreach efforts by courts to provide important general information and answers to frequently asked questions. (Phase 3)

#55 Collaboration with media. Courts should collaborate with local media and leverage the resources of media outlets, including ethnic media that communicate with their consumers in their language, as a means of disseminating information throughout the community about language access services, the court process, and available court resources. (Phase 3)

#65. Complaints regarding statewide translations. The translation committee (as described in Recommendation 36 above), in consultation with the Implementation Task Force, will develop a process to address complaints about the quality of Judicial Council–approved translations, including translation of Judicial Council forms, the California Courts Online Self-Help Center, and other Judicial Council–issued publications and information. (Phase 3)

#68. Implementation Task Force to evaluate need for updates to rules and statutes. To ensure ongoing and effective implementation of the LAP, the Implementation Task Force will evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the need for new statutes or rules or modifications of existing rules and statutes. (Phases 2 and 3)

Appendix B: Prerequisites, Considerations, and Guidelines for Remote Interpreting in Court Proceedings⁴⁴

Before a court begins using remote interpreting (RI) they must meet certain prerequisites that are outlined below. Additionally, prior to selecting RI for a particular courtroom event the court must consider, at minimum, the following specific factors for determining the appropriateness of RI. When utilizing RI for a courtroom event the court must adhere to the guidelines below.

PREREQUISITES

- A. Minimum Technology Requirements for Remote Interpreting:
Prior to instituting RI in any proceeding the court should ensure that it has the equipment and technology to provide high quality communications. (Until the Implementation Task Force has established technology minimums for RI, as required under Recommendation 14, Appendix D should be consulted on an interim basis.)
- B. Training:
Prior to instituting RI in a proceeding, the court should ensure that all persons who will be involved in the RI event have adequate training in the use of the equipment, in interpreting protocols, and in interactions with LEP persons.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATENESS OF RI FOR COURT EVENT

Not all courtroom proceedings are appropriate for RI. The initial analysis for determining whether a court proceeding is appropriate for RI will most likely be made by the interpreter coordinator who may choose to consult with the interpreter being considered for the assignment. Courtroom proceedings that are lengthy, complex, or involve more than simple evidence are not typically appropriate for RI. Additionally, the interpreter coordinator or the judicial officer or both should consider all of the following before deciding to use RI:

- The anticipated length and complexity of the event, including complexity of the communications involved;
- The relative convenience or inconvenience to the court user;
- Whether the matter is uncontested;

⁴⁴ This appendix contains suggested guidelines based on current best practices and, as such, should be subject to updating and revision to accommodate advances in technology that will help ensure quality communication with LEP court users.

- Whether the proceeding is of an immediate nature, such as arraignments for in- custody defendants, bail reductions, and temporary restraining orders;
- Whether the LEP party is present in the courtroom;
- The number of court users planned to receive interpretation from the same interpreter during the event;
- The efficient deployment of court resources;
- Whether the LEP party requires a relay interpreter, e.g., where there is an interpreter for an indigenous language who relays the interpretation in Spanish. (The need for a relay interpreter does not preclude the use of RI, but might necessitate the presence of at least one of the interpreters in the courtroom.)

GUIDELINES FOR USING RI IN A COURT PROCEEDING

1. Need to Interrupt or Clarify, and Suspend and Reschedule

When using RI the court should consult with the interpreter to determine how best to facilitate interruptions or clarifications that may be needed. The court should suspend and reschedule a matter if, for technology or other reasons, RI is not facilitating effective communication, or if the interpreter finds the communications to be ineffective.

2. VRI and RI Challenges

The court shall be mindful of the particular challenges involved in remote interpreting, including increased fatigue and stress; events involving remote interpreting should have shorter sessions and more frequent breaks.

3. Participants Who Must Have Access

The remote interpreter's voice must be heard clearly throughout the court room, and the interpreter must be able to hear all participants.

4. Visual/Auditory Issues, Confidentiality, and Modes of Interpreting

Video remote interpreting (VRI) is generally preferred over other methods of remote interpreting that do not provide visual cues, such as telephonic interpreting. However, there will be situations where VRI is not possible or is not necessary. (See Appendix D for visual/auditory issues and requirements for confidentiality that must be considered and accounted for when implementing RI.)

5. Documents and Other Information

The court shall ensure the availability of technology to communicate written information to the interpreter including a copy of exhibits being introduced, as well as information after a

proceeding, such as an order, so the interpreter can provide sight translation to the LEP individual if needed.

6. Professional Standards and Ethics

The same rules for using qualified interpreters apply to assignments using RI. It is the intent of this language access plan to expand the availability of certified and registered interpreters through the use of RI. All interpreters performing RI should be familiar with, and are bound by, the same professional standards and ethics as onsite court interpreters.⁴⁵

7. Data Collection

(a) Courts using RI in the courtroom should monitor the effectiveness of their technology and equipment, and the satisfaction of participants.

(b) For purposes of supporting funding requests, courts should track the benefits and resource savings resulting from RI on an ongoing basis (e.g., increased certified/registered interpreter availability to assist with additional events due to the use of RI, and any cost savings).

⁴⁵ The requirements for provisionally qualifying an interpreter can be found in Government Code section 68651(c) and California Rules of Court, rule 2.893.

**Appendix C: Suggested Language for the Judicial Officer When Considering Objections
Related to Remote Interpreting**

We will have a court certified/registered __(*insert language*)_____ interpreter help us with these proceedings.

The interpreter is at a remote location and will appear in court via video- (or audio-) conference. Please remember to speak slowly and clearly and not speak at the same time as each other.

Do parties and counsel have any objections to the interpreter remotely participating by remote interpreting for today’s proceedings?

[Judge rules on objections, if any, or assists in resolving concerns.]

IF PROCEEDING WITH VRI:

Parties and counsel had no objections to the use of remote interpreting, so the court will proceed with today’s hearing.

[or]

Parties and counsel objected to the use of remote interpreting, but the court has overruled those objections, so the court will proceed with today’s hearing.

IF NOT PROCEEDING WITH VRI:

Parties and counsel objected to the use of remote interpreting. The court will not continue with today’s hearing at this time and will reset this matter for a qualified (*insert language*)_____ language interpreter to be available in person.

Suggested Language to Include in the Minutes:

Interpreter (*name*)_____ is present by video remote conferencing and sworn to interpret (*insert language*)_____ language for (*name*)_____. Sworn oath on file with the Superior Court of California, County of _____.

Appendix D: Visual/Auditory Issues, Confidentiality, and Modes of Interpreting When Working Remotely

- 1.** A clear view of the LEP court user is more important than a view of every speaker; although cameras on all stakeholders may be beneficial, it may not be essential. A speakerphone is not recommended unless it accommodates the other requirements of this appendix, including the ability to be part of a solution to allow for simultaneous interpreting when needed.
- 2.** To ensure the opportunity for confidential attorney-client conferencing, the attorney should have available an individual handset, headset, or in-the-ear communication device to speak with and listen to the interpreter.
- 3.** Interpreting in the courtroom regularly involves both simultaneous and consecutive modes of interpreting. This can be achieved in a variety of ways using existing and emerging technologies. In longer matters, failure to have a technical solution that can accommodate simultaneous interpreting will result in delays of court time and may cause frustration with remote interpreting. Courts should use a technical solution that will allow for simultaneous interpreting. However, there may be proceedings (for example, very short matters) in which consecutive interpreting is adequate to ensure language access.
- 4.** Recognizing that courts may implement very different technical solutions for RI, it is critical that prior to the start of an interpreted event all parties, judicial officers, court staff, and officers of the court (including attorneys and interpreters) know how to allow for confidential conferencing when needed.
- 5.** All participants, including the LEP party and the interpreters, need to check microphone and/or camera clarity before beginning interpretation.
- 6.** Both RI interpreters and courts should have technical support readily available.
- 7.** Clear, concise operating instructions should be posted with the RI equipment.

Note: There are different and other visual considerations, including visual confidentiality, if using VRI with American Sign Language (ASL). Please see www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CIP-ASL-VRI-Guidelines.pdf for a complete discussion of using VRI with ASL-interpreted events.

Appendix E: Top 17 Languages Accounting for 98.5% of All Service Days for 2004–2008

Rank	Language	Service Days (Avg. per year)
1	Spanish	167,744
2	Vietnamese	6,968
3	Korean	3,687
4	Mandarin	3,143
5	Russian	2,753
6	Eastern Armenian	2,493
7	Cantonese	2,117
8	Punjabi	2,083
9	Farsi	1,760
10	Tagalog	1,645
11	Hmong	1,523
12	Khmer	1,191
13	Laotian	861
14	Arabic	794
15	Japanese	655
16	Mien	570
17	Portuguese	328

Note: This table is adapted from Table 1 of the *2010 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study*. American Sign Language is the second-most used language in the state, with 37,335 total service days, but was covered in Appendix Table 2.5 of the 2010 study.

The *2010 Language Need and Interpreter Use Study* can be found at:
www.courts.ca.gov/documents/language-interpreterneed-10.pdf

Appendix F: Minimum Proficiency Level for Designation of Staff as Bilingual

As used by the Oral Proficiency Exam, and based on the definitions (reproduced below) provided by the [American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages](#), courts must establish a proficiency level of “Intermediate Mid” as the minimum standard for designating staff as bilingual for purposes of California’s Language Access Plan. Courts may wish to select a higher standard depending on the position being filled.

INTERMEDIATE MID

Speakers at the Intermediate Mid sublevel are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. These include personal information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, and lodging.

Intermediate Mid speakers tend to function reactively, for example, by responding to direct questions or requests for information. However, they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices, and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and [aspect](#), and using communicative strategies, such as [circumlocution](#).

Intermediate Mid speakers are able to express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to produce responses typically consisting of sentences and strings of sentences. Their speech may contain pauses, reformulations, and self-corrections as they search for adequate vocabulary and appropriate language forms to express themselves. In spite of the limitations in their vocabulary and/or pronunciation and/or grammar and/or syntax, Intermediate Mid speakers are generally understood by sympathetic [interlocutors](#) accustomed to dealing with non-natives.

Overall, Intermediate Mid speakers are at ease when performing Intermediate-level tasks and do so with significant quantity and quality of Intermediate-level language.

INTERMEDIATE HIGH

Intermediate High speakers are able to converse with ease and confidence when dealing with the routine tasks and social situations of the Intermediate level. They are able to handle

successfully uncomplicated tasks and social situations requiring an exchange of basic information related to their work, school, recreation, particular interests, and areas of competence.

Intermediate High speakers can handle a substantial number of tasks associated with the Advanced level, but they are unable to sustain performance of all of these tasks all of the time. Intermediate High speakers can narrate and describe in all major time frames using connected discourse of paragraph length, but not all the time. Typically, when Intermediate High speakers attempt to perform Advanced-level tasks, their speech exhibits one or more features of [breakdown](#), such as the failure to carry out fully the narration or [description](#) in the appropriate major time frame, an inability to maintain paragraph-length [discourse](#), or a reduction in breadth and appropriateness of vocabulary.

Intermediate High speakers can generally be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, although interference from another language may be evident (e.g., use of [code-switching](#), false [cognates](#), literal translations), and a pattern of gaps in communication may occur.

ADVANCED LOW

Speakers at the Advanced Low sublevel are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks. They are able to participate in most informal and some formal conversations on topics related to school, home, and leisure activities. They can also speak about some topics related to employment, current events, and matters of public and community interest. Advanced Low speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in the major time frames of past, present, and future in paragraph-length discourse with some control of aspect. In these narrations and descriptions, Advanced Low speakers combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length, although these narrations and descriptions tend to be handled separately rather than interwoven. They can handle appropriately the essential linguistic challenges presented by a complication or an unexpected turn of events. Responses produced by Advanced Low speakers are typically not longer than a single paragraph. The speaker's dominant language may be evident in the use of false cognates, literal translations, or the oral paragraph structure of that language. At times their discourse may be minimal for the level, marked by an irregular flow, and containing noticeable self-correction. More generally, the performance of Advanced Low speakers tends to be uneven. Advanced Low speech is typically marked by a certain grammatical roughness (e.g., inconsistent control of verb endings), but the overall performance of the Advanced-level tasks is sustained, albeit minimally. The vocabulary

of Advanced Low speakers often lacks specificity. Nevertheless, Advanced Low speakers are able to use communicative strategies such as rephrasing and circumlocution. Advanced Low speakers contribute to the conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity, and precision to convey their intended message without misrepresentation or confusion. Their speech can be understood by native speakers unaccustomed to dealing with non-natives, even though this may require some repetition or restatement. When attempting to perform functions or handle topics associated with the Superior level, the linguistic quality and quantity of their speech will deteriorate significantly.

Appendix G: Resource List

Commission on the Future of the California Courts, *Justice in the Balance 2020* (1993), available at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/2020.pdf

National Center for State Courts, *A National Call to Action, Access to Justice for Limited English Proficient Litigants: Creating Solutions to Language Barriers in State Courts* (July 2013), at www.ncsc.org/Services-and-Experts/Areas-of-expertise/Language-access/A-National-Call-To-Action.aspx

Kaiser Permanente, Qualified Bilingual Staff Model & Program at <http://kpqbs.org>, and Healthcare Interpreter Certificate Program at <http://kphci.org/>

Asian Americans Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County* (2013), at www.advancingjustice-la.org/system/files/CommunityofContrasts_LACounty2013.pdf

Asian Americans Advancing Justice, *A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in California* (2013), www.advancingjustice-la.org/system/files/Communities_of_Contrast_California_2013.pdf

California's Indigenous Farmworkers: Final Report of the Indigenous Farmworker Study (IFS) to the California Endowment (Jan. 2010), at www.crla.org/sites/all/files/content/uploads/News/NewsUpdate/IFS-ReportJan10.pdf

Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County, *Justice Silenced: The Harms Suffered by Litigants Denied Access in Los Angeles Superior Courts* (Mar. 2014)

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), Standard Practice Papers, at <http://www.rid.org/interpreting/Standard+Practice+Papers/index.cfm>

The California Court's Online Self-Help Center, in English at www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm, and in Spanish (Centro de ayuda en línea) at www.sucorte.ca.gov

The JusticeCorps program detailed at www.courts.ca.gov/justicecorps.htm

University of California Hastings College of the Law's study on *Enhancing Language Access Services for LEP Court Users* (2013), at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/jc-20130426-info3.pdf

Written public comments and prepared presentations for the three public hearings held in February and March 2014 regarding language access, at www.courts.ca.gov/24466.htm

Demographic data for California's English Learner population, available at <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

State Seal of Bilingual Literacy, available at www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbilinguality.asp

California Court Interpreters Program, also known as the Court Language Access Support Program (CLASP), at www.courts.ca.gov/programs-interpreters.htm

“Interpreter Orientation: Working in the California Courts.” This online course is also available to current interpreters for continuing education credit, at www.courts.ca.gov/21714.htm

The California Court Interpreters Program has commissioned various studies and reports related to its testing program, other testing programs, and other related issues, available at www.courts.ca.gov/2686.htm

Professional Standards and Ethics for Court Interpreters (May 2013), at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CIP-Ethics-Manual.pdf

Trial Court Interpreters Program Expenditure Report for Fiscal Year 2012–2013, at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/lr_TC-Interpreter-Program-FY-2012-2013.pdf

Recommended Guidelines for Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) for ASL-Interpreted Events (2012), at www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CIP-ASL-VRI-Guidelines.pdf

Sabine Braun, “Recommendations for the use of video-mediated interpreting in criminal proceedings,” in *Videoconference and Remote Interpreting in Criminal Proceedings*, eds. Sabine Braun and Judith L. Taylor (Guildford: University of Surrey, 2011), 265–287, at http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/303017/2/14_Braun_recommendations.pdf

Video Remote Interpreting Position Statement, California Federation of Interpreters (September 2013), available at http://www.calinterpreters.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CFI_VRI_Position.pdf

Council of Language Access Coordinators, “Remote Interpreting Guide for Courts and Court Staff” (unpublished draft, June 2014)

Information regarding the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) available at <https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/California/Pages/CA-COURT-ORAL-PROFICIENCY-EXAM.aspx>

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages proficiency levels, at www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012/english/speaking

Interagency Language Roundtable’s skill descriptions for interpreter performance, at www.govtilr.org/Skills/interpretationSLDsapproved.htm

Consortium for Legal Access in the Courts, Professional Issues Committee, *Guide to Translation of Legal Materials* (National Center for State Courts, Apr. 2011), available at www.ncsc.org/education-and-careers/state-interpreter-certification/~/_media/files/pdf/education%20and%20careers/state%20interpreter%20certification/guide%20to%20translation%20practices%206-14-11.ashx

Institute for Local Government, *Language Access Laws and Legal Issues: A Local Official's Guide* (2011), at www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources_Language_Access_Guide_formatted_9-27-11_0.pdf
A Local Official's Guide to Language Access Laws (2013) 10 Hastings Race & Poverty L.J. 31

American Bar Association (ABA) Language Access website:
www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_aid_indigent_defendants/initiatives/language_access.html

American Bar Association, Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants, *Standards for Language Access in Courts* (Feb. 2012). at
www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_aid_indigent_defendants/ls_scl_aid_standards_for_language_access_proposal.authcheckdam.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice, *Language Access Plan* (Mar. 2012), at
www.justice.gov/open/language-access-plan.pdf

U.S. Department of Justice, *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, 67 Fed.Reg. 41455–41472 (June 18, 2002), at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-06-18/pdf/02-15207.pdf

Exec. Order No. 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons With Limited English Proficiency*, 65 Fed.Reg. 50121–50122 (Aug. 11, 2000), and U.S. Department of Justice, *Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency; Policy Guidance*, 65 Fed.Reg. 50123–50125 (Aug. 11, 2000), both at www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/Pubs/eolep.pdf

Limited English Proficiency, a federal interagency website, at www.lep.gov/

Memorandum to Federal Agencies from U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Reaffirming the Mandates of Executive Order 13166 (Feb. 17, 2011), at
www.lep.gov/13166/AG_021711_EO_13166_Memo_to_Agencies_with_Supplement.pdf

LEP.gov State Court-specific Resources: <http://www.lep.gov/resources/resources.html#SC>

Reporting and Complaint Processes in Other States

http://rid.org/ethics/file_complaint/

Wisconsin: <https://www.wicourts.gov/services/public/interpretercomplaint.htm>

Tennessee: www.tsc.state.tn.us/sites/default/files/docs/grievance_discipline_process_april_2012.pdf

Ohio: <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/interpreterSvcs/default.asp>

North Carolina: [www.nccourts.org/ Surveys/LA/languageaccess.htm](http://www.nccourts.org/Surveys/LA/languageaccess.htm)

Georgia: http://w2.georgiacourts.org/coj/files/Rule%20on%20Interpreters%20-%20FINAL_JULY.pdf

Nebraska: <http://supremecourt.ne.gov/sites/supremecourt.ne.gov/files/reports/courts/language-access-plan.pdf>
(see Appendix 20)

Arkansas: <https://courts.arkansas.gov/sites/default/files/tree/Arkansas%20LEP%20Plan.pdf> (pp. 15–16)

Alaska: www.law.state.ak.us/pdf/criminal/LanguageAccessPlan.pdf (pp. 19–20)

New York: <http://labor.ny.gov/formsdocs/dipa/la1.pdf>

Training Tools From Other States

Ohio: www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=140618

Minnesota: www.mncourts.gov/?page=4347

Appendix H: Evid. Code, § 756 and Gov. Code, § 68092.1

Section 756 is added to the Evidence Code, to read:

756.

(a) To the extent required by other state or federal laws, the Judicial Council shall reimburse courts for court interpreter services provided in civil actions and proceedings to any party who is present in court and who does not proficiently speak or understand the English language for the purpose of interpreting the proceedings in a language the party understands, and assisting communications between the party, his or her attorney, and the court.

(b) If sufficient funds are not appropriated to provide an interpreter to every party that meets the standard of eligibility, court interpreter services in civil cases reimbursed by the Judicial Council, pursuant to subdivision (a), shall be prioritized by case type by each court in the following order:

(1) Actions and proceedings under Division 10 (commencing with Section 6200) of the Family Code, actions or proceedings under the Uniform Parentage Act (Part 3 (commencing with Section 7600) of Division 12 of the Family Code) in which a protective order has been granted or is being sought pursuant to Section 6221 of the Family Code, and actions and proceedings for dissolution or nullity of marriage or legal separation of the parties in which a protective order has been granted or is being sought pursuant to Section 6221 of the Family Code; actions and proceedings under subdivision (w) of Section 527.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure; and actions and proceedings for physical abuse or neglect under the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act (Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 15600) of Part 3 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code).

(2) Actions and proceedings relating to unlawful detainer.

(3) Actions and proceedings to terminate parental rights.

(4) Actions and proceedings relating to conservatorship or guardianship, including the appointment or termination of a probate guardian or conservator.

(5) Actions and proceedings by a parent to obtain sole legal or physical custody of a child or rights to visitation.

(6) All other actions and proceedings under Section 527.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure or the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act (Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 15600) of Part 3 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code).

(7) All other actions and proceedings related to family law.

(8) All other civil actions or proceedings.

- (c) (1) If funds are not available to provide an interpreter to every party that meets the standard of eligibility, preference shall be given for parties proceeding in forma pauperis pursuant to Section 68631 of the Government Code in any civil action or proceeding described in paragraph (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), or (8) of subdivision (b).
- (2) Courts may provide an interpreter to a party outside the priority order listed in subdivision (b) when a qualified interpreter is present and available at the court location and no higher priority action that meets the standard of eligibility described in subdivision (a) is taking place at that location during the period of time for which the interpreter has already been compensated.
- (d) A party shall not be charged a fee for the provision of a court interpreter.
- (e) In seeking reimbursement for court interpreter services, the court shall identify to the Judicial Council the case types for which the interpretation to be reimbursed was provided. Courts shall regularly certify that in providing the interpreter services, they have complied with the priorities and preferences set forth in subdivisions (b) and (c), which shall be subject to review by the Judicial Council.
- (f) This section shall not be construed to alter, limit, or negate any right to an interpreter in a civil action or proceeding otherwise provided by state or federal law, or the right to an interpreter in criminal, traffic, or other infraction, juvenile, or mental competency actions or proceedings.
- (g) This section shall not result in a reduction in staffing or compromise the quality of interpreting services in criminal, juvenile, or other types of matters in which interpreters are provided.

Section 68092.1 is added to the Government Code, to read:

68092.1.

- (a) The Legislature finds and declares that it is imperative that courts provide interpreters to all parties who require one, and that both the legislative and judicial branches of government continue in their joint commitment to carry out this shared goal.
- (b) Notwithstanding Section 26806 or 68092, or any other law, a court may provide an interpreter in any civil action or proceeding at no cost to the parties, regardless of the income of the parties. However, until sufficient funds are appropriated to provide an interpreter to every party who needs one, interpreters shall initially be provided in accordance with the priorities set forth in Section 756 of the Evidence Code.