



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR INTERPRETERS

Interpreters help assure that litigants and clients enjoy equal access to justice by efficiently and effectively communicating the issues at hand. While serving as an interpreter, please be mindful to follow the guidelines listed below.

- 1. accuracy and completeness** - Interpreters are obligated to apply their best skills and judgment to preserve the meaning of what is said, including the style or register of speech. Interpreters should never interject their own words, phrases, or expressions. If the need arises to explain an interpreting problem (e.g., a term or phrase with no direct equivalent in the target language or a misunderstanding that only the interpreter can clarify), the interpreter should ask the attorney's permission to provide an explanation.
- 2. impartiality and avoidance of conflict of interest** - Interpreters need to be impartial and unbiased and must refrain from conduct that may give an appearance of bias. This includes verbal and non-verbal displays of personal attitudes, prejudices, emotions or opinions.
- 3. confidentiality** - Interpreters must protect and uphold the confidentiality of all privileged information obtained during the course of their duties.
- 4. giving legal advice** - Interpreters must limit themselves to interpreting or translating, and must not give legal advice, express personal opinions to individuals for whom they are interpreting, or engage in any other activities which may be construed to constitute a service other than interpreting or translating while serving as an interpreter. When interpreting for an attorney who is providing legal advice, an interpreter acts solely as the medium of communication, interpreting the advice the attorney is giving to his or her client. The interpreter must not explain the purpose of forms, services or otherwise act as counselors or advisors; he or she must only interpret from one language to another for someone who is acting in that official capacity.
- 5. assessing and reporting impediments to performance** - Interpreters shall assess at all times their ability to perform interpreting services. If an interpreter has any reservation about his or her ability to satisfy an assignment competently, the interpreter must immediately convey that reservation.

### do:

- Use the 1<sup>st</sup> person when interpreting the litigant's conversation (e.g., "I never signed a contract"; contrasted with "he never signed a contract.")
- Take notes during the conversation to insure accuracy.
- Ask the attorney or the client/litigant to pause when the sentence is at risk of becoming too long to interpret.

### avoid:

- Giving a much shorter or summarized version of what the client/litigant is saying.
- Having "side bar" conversations with the litigant without explaining to the attorney what these conversations are about.