

Interpreter Committee Report 2003

- 1. Interpreter training.** The court interpreter program has presented eleven interpreter orientation programs in six cities during 2002-03. The two-day program covers the new court interpreter code of ethics, the interpreter's role in the courtroom, court terminology and procedure, and business practices for court interpreters. Participants practice their skills for several hours in small language groups. The program has trained a total of 352 interpreters of 17 languages (see attached chart). The final training of the year is scheduled for November 7-8 in Wausau.
- 2. Written tests.** The program administers a set of four written tests developed by the National Center for State Courts for courts to use in screening potential court interpreters. The content areas are English proficiency, legal terminology and procedure, the interpreter code of ethics, and a written translation exercise. Passing the four written tests indicates knowledge of the subject matter, but it does not mean that an interpreter is certified.
- 3. Certification.** Certification is a term of art meaning that an interpreter has passed a rigorous oral performance exam measuring on-the-job skills needed in court. Wisconsin will offer oral certification exams developed by the National Center for State Courts, starting with Spanish and Hmong. Reciprocity will be offered to interpreters who are federally certified, to those who have passed the consortium oral exam in other states, and to sign language interpreters who hold legal certificates from the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. The committee recommends that certified interpreters be hired first whenever they are available.
- 4. Roster.** The court website will soon include a roster of trained interpreters who have attended the orientations. The roster will be divided into three sections: certified interpreters, interpreters who have passed all four sections of the written test, and all other interpreters who have attended the orientation. It will also include information on interpreter agencies and telephone services.
- 5. Funding.** The Supreme Court sought increased funding for interpreter services as part of its budget request. The governor's budget provided funding for an interpreter coordinator position and a training and testing program, but this item was deleted by the legislature. The legislature did provide an additional \$138,100 for reimbursement to the counties for direct interpreter services for 2003-05. The director's office received two small grants from the Department of Workforce Development, Office of Refugee Services, which allowed it to offer the orientation programs in 2002-03. For the next two years, the court has secured a \$250,000 federal grant that will allow the court interpreter program to run at full strength and to hire a full-time coordinator for two years. The grant was made possible by the efforts of Senator Herb Kohl.
- 6. Training and materials.** Members of the court interpreter committee have presented education programs to audiences of judges, court commissioners, victim-witness coordinators, district attorneys, defense attorneys, clerks of court, and refugee service providers. They have worked with the criminal jury instructions and benchbook committees to improve the materials available.

7. **Limited English proficiency policy.** The director's office has developed a limited English proficiency (LEP) plan for the state court system in keeping with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and guidance recently issued by the US Department of Justice. Consistent with the state plan, the director's office will develop a template for counties to create their own plans to ensure that adequate language services are available.

8. **Website.** The court interpreter website contains interpreter-related statutes, case law, the interpreter code of ethics, and practical suggestions for working with interpreters. See <http://www.wicourts.gov/circuit/courtinterpreter.htm>.

2002-3 Court Interpreter Orientation Participants by Language and Training Location

	Trainers	Milwaukee	Eau Claire	Wausau	Appleton	Madison	Rice Lake	Total
Spanish	9	62	12	13	33	55	10	194
Hmong	4	21	1	8	30	10		74
BosnianSC	1	10	1		1	1		14
Russian		7	1	1	2	3		14
ASL	1	10	1	2	3	11		28
Somali	1		4				3	8
Vietnamese		2				1		3
Laotian		3			1			4
Chinese		1		1	2	1		5
Urdu		1						1
Albanian	1							1
Arabic	1							1
Polish						1		1
French					1			1
Micronesian					1			1
Italian					1			1
Burmese						1		1
Total	18	117	20	25	75	84	13	352