

Tips for Working with a Court Interpreter

- Speak clearly and at a moderate pace, and remember to pause between complete thoughts when your answers are long.
- Listen to the court interpreter and respond only in your native language, even if you do understand some English.
- Speak directly to the person asking the question or speaking to you, not to the court interpreter.
- Wait for the interpreter to finish speaking before you speak.
- Respond to the court interpreter's hand signals to slow down or to stop talking so that he can interpret what you said.
- Ask the court interpreter to repeat what he has interpreted, to speak louder, or to speak more slowly, if necessary.



NORTH CAROLINA
JUDICIAL BRANCH

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Do You Need a Court Interpreter?

*Removing Barriers to
Equal Access to Justice*



NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL BRANCH



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Can family and friends serve as court interpreters?

No. Your family or friends can help you communicate with court staff outside the courtroom. However, only interpreters approved by the court can serve as court interpreters in official court proceedings.

When the Court Will Provide an Interpreter

The North Carolina Judicial Branch is committed to removing barriers that prohibit equal access to justice by individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP).

The court shall require an interpreter for any court proceeding involving a party in interest who speaks a language other than English as his primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, or understand English.

Who Pays for the Court Interpreter

- The Judicial Branch will provide an interpreter at state expense in all civil and criminal court proceedings before a magistrate, clerk of superior court, district court judge, superior court judge, the Court of Appeals, or the Supreme Court.
- The Judicial Branch will provide an interpreter at state expense for child custody mediation, permanency mediation, and child planning conferences.
- The Judicial Branch will provide an interpreter at state expense to facilitate communication involving the district attorney, indigent defendants or respondents and appointed counsel, or the Guardian ad Litem Program.
- The Judicial Branch will not provide an interpreter at state expense for out-of-court communications between privately retained counsel and their civil clients, privately retained counsel and their non-indigent criminal defendants, for probation and parole functions, and for private mediations and arbitrations.

How to Request a Court Interpreter

If you are scheduled to appear in a court proceeding for which interpreters are provided at state expense, you or your attorney should submit a request for an interpreter to the local Language Access Coordinator (LAC). Written requests should be submitted electronically by completing the *Request for Spoken Foreign Language Court Interpreter*, located here: <http://www.nccourts.org/LanguageAccess/Documents/InterpreterRequestForm.pdf>

Requests for interpreters should be submitted at least 10 business days prior to the scheduled court proceeding.

The LAC for each county may be contacted by sending an email to an address using the naming convention: County.Interpreter@nccourts.org. For example, Wake.Interpreter@nccourts.org and NewHanover.Interpreter@nccourts.org.

If you have not requested an interpreter prior to the court date, you should notify the courtroom clerk or magistrate that you need an interpreter as soon as you arrive for the court proceeding. If the LAC does not have sufficient time to find a qualified court interpreter, your proceeding will be continued.

What if I need an interpreter outside of the courtroom?

Outside of the courtroom, the Judicial Branch offers telephone interpreting services to help LEP individuals communicate with court personnel. Tell the staff person that you need an interpreter and the staff person will arrange for an interpreter to assist you by phone, at no charge to you. When you ask for the interpreter, say the name of the language you speak or point to your language on an I-Speak card provided by the staff person.

What the Court Interpreter Will Do

- Before the proceeding begins, the court interpreter *will* need to hear you speak in your native language and will explain his role as a court interpreter.
- During your court proceeding, the court interpreter *will* help you to communicate with your lawyer, court personnel, and the judge.
- The court interpreter *will* interpret everything you say into English and will interpret everything said in court into your native language.
- The court interpreter *will* interpret everything that is said, without adding, omitting, or changing anything.
- The court interpreter *will* maintain confidentiality of any information you have disclosed outside of the court proceeding.

What the Court Interpreter Will Not Do

- The court interpreter *will not* give you legal or any other advice.
- The court interpreter *will not* talk to you about your case.
- The court interpreter *will not* explain what words mean or what is happening in court.
- The court interpreter *will not* answer questions about the law or the legal process.
- The court interpreter *will not* have private conversations with you or your family.
- The court interpreter *will not* complete forms for you.