

# COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**August 11, 2023**

12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

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**Present:** Judge Don Taylor; Ms. Shifa Alkhatib; Ms. Laurie Allen; Ms. Elizabeth Carmona; Mr. Alfred Gonzalez; Hon. Juan Pablo Guzman; Judge Jordan T. Reardon; Ms. Kathy Schaben; Judge Danielle Viola.

**Telephonic:** None.

**Absent/Excused:** Mr. Juan Carlos Cordova; Judge Catherine Woods

**Presenters/Guests:** Mr. Joshua Allen; Mr. Chris Bleuenstein.

**Administrative Office of the Courts:** Ms. Catherine Clarich; Ms. Kelly Gray; Mr. David Svoboda.

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## I. CALL TO ORDER

### A. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The August 2023 meeting of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee was called to order by the Honorable Don Taylor, Chair, at 12:00 p.m.

### B. Approval of the March 2023 Minutes

The draft minutes from the March 10, 2023, meeting of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee was presented for approval. The Chair called for any omissions or corrections to the minutes; there were none.

- Motion was made by Shifa Alkhatib to approve the March 10, 2023, minutes of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee. Seconded by Laurie Allen. Motion passed unanimously.

## II. REGULAR BUSINESS

### A. ACICP Updates & Strategic Agenda Follow-Up

Mr. David Svoboda, in his role as Language Access Coordinator, presented updates on the Arizona Court Interpreter Credentialing Program (ACICP).

The regular session of the English Written Exam was administered in July 2023 in both Phoenix and Tucson. A total of 33 exams were administered with a pass rate of 42% (14 out of 33); staff had a 25% pass rate. Of the court staff that did not pass, none scored above 70%. Note that the test is written at a grade 14 level (i.e., 2 years of college). It is concerning that some court staff working toward a credential are not college-level speakers of English. Additionally, the court staff who failed scored poorly in the court terminology and sequence section of the test, which indicates a lack of court knowledge.

Of the preparation seminar attendees who took the exam in July, 50% passed. Interest in the prep seminar continues, and another will be offered this fall ahead of the January 2024 Written Exam session. The overall pass rate for the English Written Exam is 47%, which is just under the national average pass rate of 50%. The average pass rate for staff is 49%, again, just under the national average, but higher than the overall ACICP average.

The latest Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPIs) were administered in July 2023 in both Phoenix and Tucson. There were 24 OPIs administered with a pass rate of 100%; three staff sat for the OPI in this session. 79% of the OPIs administered were in Spanish with Arabic, Cambodian, French, and Korean comprising the other 21%. Of note, two of the passing exams were in the *Advanced-Low* range. Of these, one candidate was court staff. The remaining court staff (2) scored *Superior* and *Advanced-Mid*, respectively. Statistics show that candidates who score an *Advanced-Low* on the OPI are unsuccessful on the oral exam. Candidates who score *Advanced-Mid* on the OPI have a 50% chance of passing the oral exam. Candidates who score in the *Superior* or *Advanced-High* ranges on the OPI have the best chance of passing the oral.

The most recent administration of the Oral Exam was in May 2023. There were 32 exams administered with an overall pass rate of 40.6% (13 out of 32). Languages tested in this session were Spanish (25), Korean (3), Mandarin (2), and Vietnamese (2). Overall, there were eight new credentials earned; Of these, three Tier 3 credentials and five Tier 2 credentials were earned. There were 10 staff interpreters who sat for this exam. Three staff qualified for Tier 3 and three more passed, but did not advance to a higher credential.

Oral Exam results continue to show markedly increased pass rates for those who attend an Oral Exam preparation class versus those who do not. Of those candidates who earned credentials from the May 2023 Oral Exam, 75% (6 of 8) attended a prep seminar; three earned Tier 3 (all staff). Overall, 72.7% of prep class attendees passed (8 out of 11) compared to an overall pass rate of 40.6% in May 2023. Of these, five earned Tier 2, and three earned Tier 3. Further, the data suggests that the advantages offered by the prep class are

cumulative, and those who attend multiple prep classes continue to see benefits. Many candidates retest with every cycle, yet their performance does not improve from attempt to attempt. This suggests it may be worthwhile to consider implementation of a training requirement for those who retest without improving their performance.

The next session of the Oral Exam will be held November 1 – 4, 2023, in Phoenix and October 25 – 27, 2023, in Tucson. As of this meeting, 30 candidates are registered and paid for the test, with more expected as the September 7, 2023, registration deadline approaches. Exams will be primarily in Spanish with a few in Arabic, French, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. Results are expected by late February 2024.

The next Oral Exam Prep Class will be held virtually in September 2023 over three Saturdays. ACICP selected a different vendor for this session as there was a sharp decline in participation and enthusiasm in the last seminar with the current vendor. The National Center for Interpretation (NCI) at the University of Arizona (UA) is hosting the training session which features a federally certified interpreter with ample training experience. This seminar features 6 hours of skill building labs, a mock exam with individual score report & feedback, and online asynchronous skill-building practice between live sessions. This pilot project is ACICP-subsidized and targeted at Tier 1 and Tier 2 Spanish interpreters. ACICP is interested in evaluating the effectiveness of a scored mock exam on candidate performance. As of mid-August, all but one registrant has also registered to sit for the oral exam in October/November 2023. Unfortunately, non-Spanish interpreters have shown little interest in an ACICP-sponsored seminar in the past, so ACICP opted to focus on Spanish interpreters for this session.

The next English Written Exam Prep Class will be held virtually in December 2023. The next administration of the English Written Exam and OPI will be January 2024, in Phoenix and Tucson; the registration deadline is in early December 2023. The 2024 ACICP testing calendar will be published in early September 2023 .

Finally, Mr. Svoboda updated the group on the strategic agenda projects discussed in March 2023. All the strategic agenda items suggested by this Committee were forwarded to the strategic agenda planning group for review as they draft the Court's new agenda. The strategic agenda planning group decided not to include the item about codification of the credentialing program. However, AOC leadership supports the idea of developing a code section outside of the strategic agenda and has authorized staff to begin work on it.

## **B. Interpreter Education Workgroup Update**

Mr. Joshua Allen updated the Committee on the discussions of the Interpreter Education Workgroup at its inaugural meeting.

The workgroup identified existing training opportunities and discussed future opportunities for both court staff and per diem interpreters. The group discussed the timing, availability, delivery, structure, and subject matter of possible trainings. The group is scheduled to meet every six weeks, so will report more to this body soon.

### **C. “Streamlining” Workgroup Update**

Ms. Schaben updated the Committee on discussions held by the ACICP Streamlining Workgroup regarding possible structural modifications to the interpreter credentialing program.

The last workgroup meeting discussed possible changes to the ACICP Tier 1 credential exclusively. Ms. Schaben reminded the group that the Tier 1 credential consists of two online classes, the English Written Exam, and OPI in the interpreter’s non-English language. A test of interpreting skills is NOT included in the Tier 1 credential. This can be confusing for individuals looking to hire the most competent interpreter for a particular event, as many associate the number “1” with the top ranked candidates. So, it was suggested that renaming the Tier 1 credential would help clarify the skills incorporated in the ACICP Tier 1 credential. The workgroup recommended a survey be distributed to court administration and credentialed interpreters to gauge opinions as to possible renaming options. The survey has been distributed and the workgroup will regroup to discuss the results in the coming weeks.

### **D. Interpreter Compensation Workgroup Update & Discussion**

Ms. Schaben updated the Committee on the discussions held by the Interpreter Compensation Workgroup at its inaugural meeting.

The workgroup discussed the current conditions of staff interpreter salaries and per diem interpreter rates around the state. Court staff interpreter salaries differ between counties; however, most use a tiered model where court interpreters are compensated based on their ACICP credential level. There is a lack of data about per diem interpreter rates as many localities negotiate contracts individually with an interpreter or service. Consequently, rates can vary widely across the state. The workgroup is developing a survey for courts with goal of gathering more data about pay rates and scales used.

Discussion focused the plans for the data collected in the survey. Because Arizona has a decentralized court system, the information received is

expected to vary widely. As survey data is received, the workgroup will develop a report and recommendations.

### **E. 2023 Summit Planning Workgroup Discussion**

Mr. Svoboda, in his role as Committee staff, presented on the upcoming Summit. This event has been held annually over the last 10 years and will likely be held in-person this year. The summit is currently scheduled in mid-October.

- Motion to establish the 2023 Summit Planning Workgroup was made by Judge Danielle Viola and seconded by Mr. Alfred Gonzalez. The motion was passed unanimously. Volunteers from the Committee include Ms. Elizabeth Carmona (Chair), Mr. Alfred Gonzalez, Ms. Kelly Gray, and Judge Don Taylor. Committee staff will recruit additional members.

## **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **A. CLAC Conference Recap**

Mr. Svoboda, in his role as Language Access Coordinator, gave an overview of the annual Council of Language Access Coordinators (CLAC) conference held earlier this year. He described his role in CLAC and other national-level language access groups, as well as reviewed trending issues in language access in the courts and interpreter testing.

### **B. CEUs Registry Update & Guidance on Self Study**

Mr. Svoboda, in his role as the ACICP Program Manager, reviewed the progress of the Arizona Court Interpreter Registry modifications related to the new interpreter education requirements and discussed issues related the *Self-Study* provision in ACJA § 7-301.

*Arizona Court Interpreter Registry:* The first stage of the project, which includes background enhancements, is nearly complete. The second stage, which includes modifications not related to interpreter CEUs, is underway. The main rebuild for interpreter continuing education requirements administration is scheduled to begin later this year (stages three and four).

*Interpreter Continuing Education – Self-Study:* Mr. Svoboda went on to discuss questions that ACICP has received from interpreters about observation of court proceedings (i.e., is court observation *Self-Study* as designed in ACJA § 7-301?). Program staff have been instructing interpreters that mere observation of court proceedings alone does not fulfil the intention of the *Self-Study* provision in ACJA § 7-301. Interpreters are advised to look

for more structured educational activities outside of their daily work duties. Mr. Svoboda requested input from the Committee on this topic, with an eye to developing more guidance for interpreters that will aid them in compliance with continuing education requirements.

The Committee affirmed the approach ACICP has taken thus far regarding this issue. The Committee consensus was that observation of court proceedings alone does not comply with spirit of the code. However, if the observation was part of a larger learning activity where, for example, the interpreter demonstrates learning, is provided context and instruction, performs analysis, etc., it would likely be considered for continuing education credit. ACICP will include this clarification in an upcoming FAQ-style document on continuing education for interpreters.

## **IV. CALL TO PUBLIC**

### **A. Good of the Order/Call to the Public**

A call was made to the public for any comments. Judge Don Taylor asked the Committee for input on the idea of moving back to in-person or hybrid style meetings. The Committee feels that the remote format has worked incredibly well over the last few years, allowing for increased participation by all members, particularly those who would otherwise have to travel considerable distances to appear in person, and is as effective as in-person meetings. The Committee decidedly favors the virtual format for CIPAC meetings moving forward absent explicit direction to the contrary.

## **V. ADJOURNMENT**

### **A. Adjourn**

- Motion was made by Ms. Kathy Schaben at 1:50 p.m. to adjourn. Seconded by Judge Danielle Viola. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING DATE**

November 17, 2023  
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting