

# COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**November 18, 2022**  
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 Maya; Mr. Alfred Gonzalez; Hon. Juan Pablo Guzman; Judge Anna Huberman; Ms. Maria Mendoza (proxy for Judge Catherine Woods); Ms. Kathy Schaben; Judge Danielle Viola

**Telephonic:** Mr. Juan Carlos Cordova

**Absent/Excused:** None.

**Presenters/Guests:** Dr. Chris Bleuenstein

**Administrative Office of the Courts:** Ms. Catherine Clarich; Ms. Kelly Gray; Mr. Michael Malone; Ms. Diane McCuiston-Speed; Mr. David Svoboda

## I. CALL TO ORDER

### A. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The November 18, 2022, meeting of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee was called to order by Judge Don Taylor, Chair, at 12:01 p.m. The Chair asked for Committee member roll call and introductions of staff and guests. The Chair thanked Judge Anna Huberman, whose term expires at the end of the year, for serving on the Committee since its inception; Judge Jordan Reardon will fill the vacancy on the Committee. Ms. Xiomara Smith has stepped down as president of the Arizona Court Interpreters Association, and Ms. Elizabeth Carmona Maya, interim ACIA president, will be serving the remainder of Ms. Smith's term.

### B. Approval of the August 12, 2022, Minutes

The draft minutes from the August 12, 2022, of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee were presented for approval. The Chair called for any omissions or corrections to the minutes; there were none.

- Motion was made by Hon. Juan Pablo Guzman to approve the August 12, 2022, minutes of the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee. Seconded by Judge Anna Huberman. Motion passed unanimously.

## II. REGULAR BUSINESS

## **A. ACICP Updates**

Mr. David Svoboda, in his role as AOC Language Access Coordinator, reviewed recent developments of the Arizona Court Interpreter Credentialing Program.

The fall administration of the oral examination was held November 2 – 5, 2022 in Phoenix and Tucson. Out of 47 registrants, 38 candidates sat for the exam. As is typical, most exams were in Spanish, with a small percentage in Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. Results are expected in late January or early February 2023.

The English Written Exam and Oral Proficiency Interview Preparation Seminar is scheduled for December 7 – 9, 2022. This seminar will be held online via Zoom and recorded for later viewing by participants. Co-presenters, Judith Costello and Carlos Reyes, are from Coconino and Yavapai Counties. Registration is still open with a current count of approximately 15 registrants. Registration remains open until December 1<sup>st</sup>, and payment is due no later than December 2<sup>nd</sup>. The ACIA will disseminate information to their membership about the December 2022 preparation seminar.

The 2023 calendar has been published online and includes two cycles of each exam in Phoenix and Tucson. The next English Written Exam and Oral Proficiency Interviews are scheduled in January 2023.

ACICP continues to collaborate with the court interpreter program at Pima Community College (PCC). Their TRS-162 fall course began mid-August with 27 students enrolled. Based on feedback from students citing inadequate time to prepare for exams, the course start date was moved from October to August, increasing the course length from 8 weeks to 16 weeks. This class is online, except for the English Written Exam which must be taken in person. Tier 1 classes and exam fees are included in the tuition. The English Written Exam for PCC students enrolled in the interpreter program will be held December 1, 2022, at the downtown Tucson campus; the Oral Proficiency Interviews for these students are currently being scheduled.

Additionally, AOC staff has been made aware that courts are requesting official guidance to help them map out the approved duties and requirements for bilingual staff. The Committee consensus is that the existing guidance is clear, but implementation may be troublesome; therefore, it is suggested that a short training presentation be produced and that guidance also be included in any updates to existing customer service training.

## **B. 2022 Summit Recap**

Ms. Laurie Allen, Limited Court Administrator of Mohave County and Summit Planning Workgroup member, shared a recap on the topics and discussions held at the 2022 Interpreter Coordinator Summit.

Topics presented were continuity of court operations during a public health emergency, continuing education requirements for court interpreters, education of users of interpreter services on new delivery platforms, and several topics related to ADA Title II and ASL interpreters. There were four breakout sessions in the afternoon, covering finding interpreters of very rare languages, technological impacts on service delivery for interpreter services, language access plan impact of virtual hearings, and providing training and support for uncredentialed interpreters. There were 48 registrants for the summit, and approximately 40 were able to attend with good representation from around the state. Surveys from attendees indicate that this year's summit was quite well-received; the overall satisfaction rating was 97.4%.

### **C. Contract Interpreter Compensation**

Ms. Kathy Schaben, Yuma County Superior Court Administrator, led a discussion on contract interpreter compensation.

Courts throughout the state are having difficulty recruiting and retaining freelance court interpreters, as well as meeting their rising requested rates. These rates vary widely and do not necessarily correlate with knowledge and expertise of the interpreter providing the services. Courts are also short on staff. Other states are calling on Arizona interpreters, further increasing competition for interpreters and requested pay rates. Arizona's non-unified court system makes studying this issue more complex than simply comparing our rates to those of other states. The last local study on interpreter pay was several years ago, so further study is needed.

- Motion was made by Ms. Kathy Schaben to form a workgroup to study the salaries and per diem rates of interpreters providing services both within Arizona and outside the state and make corresponding recommendations on interpreter compensation. Seconded by Mr. Juan Carlos Cordova. Motion passed unanimously.

### **D. Statewide LUL/ASL Interpreter**

Ms. Kathy Schaben, Yuma County Superior Court Administrator, presented for discussion the idea of statewide interpreter positions at the AOC.

An idea was presented to Ms. Schaben to have the AOC pool interpreter resources to provide services to some of the more rural Arizona courts that are struggling to get qualified interpreters, perhaps using the video remote interpreting equipment already installed at the AOC or online platforms such as

Zoom. The initial thoughts were that ASL or Spanish would be most helpful, but other languages should be considered if justified by demand. These interpreters could be supervised by Mr. David Svoboda; in addition to court interpretation duties, statewide interpreters could help with other tasks as deemed appropriate, such as translation projects. A cost-sharing model and carefully structured rules surrounding the use of such a resource should be considered in any further discussions.

At present, this idea is not yet fully developed. The problem and its extent need to be identified by reaching out to struggling courts for data and input. An alternative solution may be for smaller courts to share a floating interpreter using an IGA model. Once this information is gathered, findings and recommendations should be created so that a formal proposal can be made. The Committee will consider presenting the proposal to other committees for feedback and letters of support. AOC staff will gather data to present at the next meeting for further discussion.

## **E. Interpreter Internships**

Dr. Chris Bleuenstein presented information on the Maricopa County Superior Court's recently reinstated Court Interpreter and Translation Services (CITS) Internship Program.

The CITS internship program is a five-week educational program designed to provide hands-on experience to students, recent graduates, and emerging professionals. Interns directly observe and interact with well-seasoned court interpreters daily, participate in continuing education activities, take field trips, research terms and concepts, and take copious notes.

Interns' feedback indicates that the CITS program brings unique perspective and context to the theoretical knowledge provided by their training. Upon completion of the program, interns' chances of passing the state's court interpreter credentialing exams increase significantly. Approximately 50% of former interns passed the state or federal exams, 34% higher than credentialing candidates who are not part of the CITS program. Funding for this program comes from vacancy savings, making it a good investment for the court.

## **F. Exam Cancellations & No Shows**

Mr. David Svoboda, in his role as AOC Language Access Coordinator, presented data on the issue of rising ACICP examination cancellations and no-shows.

The AOC has been seeing a marked increase in cancellations and no-shows for all three examinations, affecting nearly 50% of appointments in recent

exams. Per policy, ACICP does not permit refunds of fees paid, but it does allow candidates to reschedule without penalty. Compared to many other states, Arizona has a very permissive stance on this. The large number of cancellations and no-shows results in increased administrative burden and wasted time, effort, travel, and other resources.

Possible solutions were discussed. Adding fees for rescheduling exams could act as a deterrent, but new fees require Arizona Judicial Council approval and there would be an additional cost from the payment processor, nCourt, to implement these new fees. The number of free reschedules could be limited to one or two times and the candidates could be required to test at the next sitting, rather than it being left open-ended. A strict policy of no reschedules would be the simplest but harshest solution. The fact that courts often pay for exam fees for their staff members should be taken into consideration; perhaps different standards for privately paid and court paid fees could be an option. AOC staff will begin to draft a policy proposal on the issue based on input from this discussion.

## **G. Continuing Education Code Section Implementation**

Mr. David Svoboda, in his role as AOC Language Access Coordinator, provided updates on the implementation of the new continuing education requirements code section.

At the recent Court Leadership Conference, the code section that the Committee put forward for continuing education for credentialed interpreters was unanimously endorsed by both the Superior Court Presiding Judges Committee and Arizona Judicial Council. [Administrative Order 2022-139](#) was signed by the Chief Justice on November 2, 2022. This continuing education requirement is now adopted and an official part of Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA). The first compliance period will begin January 1, 2023.

AOC is working to get systems and policies in place to manage this change. A request for modifications to the Arizona Court Interpreter Registry (“Registry”) is pending. AOC staff will be holding informational webinars that will explain the new requirements and expectations; these will be recorded and made available for interpreters unable to attend the live sessions. Mr. Svoboda has been added to the agenda of the annual meeting of the ACIA on December 3, 2022, so that he may share information on the new requirements. He has also reached out to the Arizona Translators and Interpreters, Inc. to request time on the agenda for their next meeting. Additionally, AOC will notify courts through a statewide memo and interpreters through the Registry.

Much work remains to make training resources available to interpreters. The formation of a permanent education workgroup to develop and push out training

programs was discussed. Education Services would be consulted on some, but not all, of the training.

- Motion was made by Ms. Kathy Schaben to create a permanent education workgroup. Seconded by Judge Danielle Viola. Motion passed unanimously. The Committee tabled appointing a workgroup chair and members until a later date at staff's discretion.

Currently, the credentialing program is governed by an administrative order while the new continuing education requirement now has its own ACJA code section. The streamlining workgroup should be reconvened with the purpose of reviewing and finalizing any recommendations to modify the structure and tier levels of the credentialing program, as well as drafting a code section for the credentialing program.

- Motion was made by Ms. Kathy Schaben to reconvene the streamlining workgroup to make recommendations on the structure and tier levels of the credentialing program and draft code section language for the credentialing program. Seconded by Hon. Juan Pablo Guzman. Motion passed unanimously.

### **III. CALL TO PUBLIC**

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

A call was made to the public for any comments. No response was received.

### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

#### **A. Adjourn**

- Motion was made by Hon. Juan Pablo Guzman at 2:26 p.m. to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Kathy Schaben. Motion passed unanimously.

### **V. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING DATE**

March 10, 2023  
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting