

# The Language of Justice

## *Interpreting for Legal Services*



### **What is The Language of Justice?**

The Language of Justice is the first national three day program designed to train community and court interpreters to perform legal interpreting for nonprofit and community services. Based on a curriculum developed by experts in legal and community interpreting across the U.S., this intensive training is designed to support interpreters who perform non-courtroom legal interpreting in community settings.

### **Why was the program developed?**

In 2007, a coalition of nonprofit legal and community services based in Washington D.C. set up a legal interpreter bank project. They needed a curriculum to train community and court interpreters in how to interpret for legal services in community settings.

The particular focus was a program to guide legal interpreters and prepare them for attorney-client interviews in nonprofit legal services

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### Why Do Interpreters Need the Language of Justice?



#### The Need

The scope and relevance of this program are national. The need is urgent. The program is unique. Protect your clients, your interpreters and the outcomes of your services. Send interpreters and bilingual staff to this groundbreaking training session.

### Community and Court Interpreters

#### **Community Interpreters**

If community interpreters perform legal interpreting incorrectly, many dangerous consequences could take place with devastating outcomes. For example, the client could:

- Be deported.
- Lose urgently needed benefits for which the client is eligible, such as food stamps, SSI, TANF or Medical Assistance.
- Go to prison.
- Be suspended from school.
- Lose child support, a driver's license or a job.
- Go back to a situation of domestic abuse.

Legal interpreting is a different profession from

community interpreting. An agency may also be legally liable for the errors of an interpreter who performs legal interpreting without proper training.

#### **Court Interpreters**

Interpreting in community settings is very different from court interpreting. Lawyers rely on the expertise of interpreters, who must know what they may and may not say. Court interpreters also need guidance on collaborative encounters. Most court interpreting involves an adversarial situation. Most non-courtroom legal interpreting is collaborative. Legal interpreting in community settings involves the same ethical canons as court interpreting but new standards of practice and professional skills.

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### **Who funded and spearheaded the program?**

The Language of Justice curriculum, training manual, workbook, trainer's guide and pilot sessions were developed and delivered under the oversight of Ayuda, a legal services nonprofit agency that worked with the coalition and a curriculum advisory group. The individuals who coordinated the project and reviewed the materials included nonprofit attorneys, professors of law, the directors of nonprofit agencies in community, legal and healthcare services, and two interpreter service coordinators.

### **How was The Language of Justice developed?**

The project coalition contracted with Cross-Cultural Communications, who engaged four consultants to develop The Language of Justice. Isabel Framer and Lois Feuerle, JD, PhD, are national experts

on legal interpreting; Marjory Bancroft, MA, is an international expert on community interpreting; and Jean Bruggeman, Esq, is the attorney who was the project's first director. Today, the program is delivered by Cross-Cultural Communications .

### **What does the program cover?**

Participants in this program learn how to perform non-courtroom legal interpreting safely and professionally. The curriculum covers:

- Procedures and requirements
- Ethics
- Standards of practice
- Linguistic mediation
- The U.S. legal system
- Legal terminology

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### **Non-Courtroom Legal Interpreting**

Legal interpreting outside the courtroom can occur in many settings. Most are less formal than a courtroom, and distinct in other ways. Such settings may include law enforcement, nonprofit community services, government agencies, schools and health care.

### **Examples**

- Attorney-client meetings
- Immigration services
- Interrogations by police officers
- Mediation and arbitration
- School board hearings and some special education services or meetings
- Office of Human Rights investigations
- Social services settings (e.g., Child Protective Services investigations; vulnerable adult abuse, etc.)
- Legal services in domestic violence cases
- Sexual assault services that involve legal proceedings
- Divorce and custody consultations
- Sight translation of legal documents



The Language of Justice program is presented by two federally court certified interpreters who are veteran trainers: Marta Goldstein, who developed the Maryland court interpreter training program, and James Plunkett, coordinator of D.C. Superior Court interpreters and a rater for the federal court interpreter certification exam. They are supported by Jean Bruggeman, Esq, who coordinated the D.C. Legal Interpreter Bank project, in a cameo DVD appearance and Marjory Bancroft, MA, Director of Cross-Cultural Communications.

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## Program Objectives

*Goal: To train community and court interpreters to provide non-courtroom legal interpreting in community settings.*

### Unit I Procedures and Ethics (7 hours)

Objective 1: The interpreter will model requirements for legal interpreters.

Objective 2: The interpreter will exhibit a sound understanding of relevant codes of ethics.

Objective 3: The interpreter will demonstrate the correct application of a code of ethic and standards of practice to ethical dilemmas and simulated encounters.

### Unit II Linguistic Mediation (7 hours)

Objective 1: The interpreter will demonstrate sound decision-making about when and how to provide linguistic mediation.

Objective 2: The interpreter will model appropriate steps for linguistic mediation.

Objective 3: The interpreter will display linguistic mediation techniques and strategies in simulated encounters.

### Unit III Linguistic Mediation (7 hours)

Objective 1: The interpreter will demonstrate knowledge of the U.S. legal system.

Objective 2: The interpreter will model how to handle requests from clients and attorneys.

Objective 3: The interpreter will review and practice the terminology required for non-courtroom legal interpreting.

### Final Assessment (1 hour)

A written assessment will evaluate participants' knowledge of the curriculum.

**For more information, or to register for the next session,**  
go to [www.cultureandlanguage.net](http://www.cultureandlanguage.net) and click on **Training** or contact the CCC office:

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