



# N.C. COURT INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC), through its membership in the National Center for State Courts' Council of Language Access Coordinators (CLAC), has developed a process to test and certify persons serving as spoken foreign language court interpreters in court proceedings in the North Carolina state courts. NCAOC's Office of Language Access Services (OLAS) oversees and conducts the court interpreter certification process. Only those Spanish language court interpreters who have become certified or whose test performance deems them conditionally qualified, and who have entered into a personal services agreement with NCAOC to provide interpreting services to the courts will be allowed to interpret for court proceedings. The testing and certification process is mandatory for all new Spanish language court interpreters and for languages other than Spanish (LOTS) interpreters, depending upon the availability of a certification examination for the interpreter's language of expertise.

Court interpreters provide a fundamental service to the courts by ensuring full and fair participation and equal access to justice by those individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP). Certification as a court interpreter ensures that spoken foreign language interpreters possess the minimum qualifications that are essential to interpreting in a court environment. The testing and certification process produces a Registry of Spoken Foreign Language Court Interpreters (*Registry*) and a directory of Federally Certified and North Carolina State Certified Spoken Foreign Language Court Interpreters (*Directory*) who have satisfied all state certification requirements. Currently, the *Registry* consists of three classification levels: **Level A1 – Master Certified**, **Level A2 – Certified**, and **Level B – Conditionally Qualified**. The *Registry*, the *Directory*, and the statewide *Standards for Language Access Services in the North Carolina Court System* (*currently pending final approval*) are public information and are available by contacting OLAS, or by visiting the North Carolina Judicial System's Language Access Services webpage at: <http://www.nccourts.org/LanguageAccess>. The *Directory* contains the names and contact information for all certified court interpreters in North Carolina, regardless of whether or not they are currently registered or authorized to provide interpreting services to the courts. The *Directory*

is not used for court scheduling purposes. The *Registry* contains the names and contact information for only those Spanish court interpreters who have qualified as a Level A1, A2, or B, and have been authorized to provide service to the courts by entering into a personal services agreement with the NCAOC to provide such services. The *Registry* is provided as a resource to the North Carolina courts and the public so that certified Spanish language court interpreters can be contacted and scheduled for services as needed.

## Testing and certification requirements for spoken foreign language court interpreters

### All North Carolina Test Candidates Taking the North Carolina Court Interpreter Certification Examination (NCCICE)

1. **North Carolina Court Interpreter Orientation and Written Screening Test Administration**
  - a. Submit the registration form and fee;
  - b. Attend both full days of training and instruction;
  - c. Pass the written English multiple choice screening test (80% or better) given at the close of the orientation session; and
  - d. For Spanish, Arabic, French, Mandarin, and Russian language candidates, pass the written foreign language proficiency assessment test (Pass / Not Pass rating) given at the close of the orientation training session; or
  - e. For all other languages for which a certification examination is available, pass the ACTFL OPI in the candidate's language of expertise with a Superior rating. NOTE: Test date must be scheduled with OLAS prior to purchasing test;
  - f. Submit an Application to be a Registered Court Interpreter (AOC-A-207);
  
2. **Mandatory Skill Building Workshop**
  - a. Submit the required registration form and fee for a workshop or course which has been approved by OLAS; and
  - b. Attend the workshop in its entirety

**NOTE:** Candidate must plan to attend a skill building workshop with sufficient time in advance of the NCCICE administration to utilize what is learned during the workshop to sufficiently develop the candidate's interpreting skills.
  
3. **North Carolina Court Interpreter Certification Examination (NCCICE)**
  - a. Submit the registration form and fee; and
  - b. Receive passing scores (70% or higher) on all three sections of the NCCICE exam
  
4. **Additional Certification Requirements**
  - a. Provide four letters of recommendation from a judge, clerk, district attorney, public defender or magistrate, **or a person of equivalent rank in another area in which the candidate has performed interpreting services, or if the person has never interpreted, a supervisor for whom they have worked;**



- b. Demonstrate good character and fitness (letters of recommendation may address this);
- c. Pass criminal background check (must not have been convicted of any crime which would affect one's credibility in court);
- d. Agree in writing to abide by all official guidelines established by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts for legal interpreting, including the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Court Interpreters*;
- e. Sign and notarize the Oath of Interpretation;
- f. Agree in writing to provide updated contact information for the *Registry* and *Directory*; and
- g. Adhere to any evaluation process, criminal record check, renewal fee, post-certification training sessions, and continuing education classes required by the NCAOC.

The NCCICE is administered at the North Carolina Judicial Center in Raleigh in October of each year. Occasionally, if there is a sufficient number of eligible candidates interested, a spring administration of the NCCICE will be announced. Only those candidates who receive passing scores on both written screening tests and / or the ACTFL OPI are eligible to proceed to sit for the NCCICE. Eligible candidates will receive NCCICE registration information on scheduling the one-hour time slot necessary for individual test administration. Additional information on taking the NCCICE will be provided to all eligible candidates once they have scheduled a time slot. Examination scores are typically returned within two months.

#### **Candidates Who Have Passed the Federal Exam (FCICE) or the CLAC's oral proficiency examination in a Member State**

- a. Submit an Application to be a Registered Court Interpreter (AOC-A-207);
- b. Pass criminal record check;
- c. Provide proof of passing FCICE or member state CLAC exam scores;
- d. Attend the North Carolina policy section of the North Carolina Court Interpreter Orientation;
- e. Sign and notarize the Oath of Interpretation;
- f. Agree in writing to include updated contact information in the *Registry* and *Directory*; and
- g. Adhere to any evaluation process, criminal record check, renewal fee, post-certification training sessions or, continuing education classes required by NCAOC.

#### **Requirement to provide interpreting services to the North Carolina courts at Judicial Branch expense**

Once eligible as a Level A1, A2 or B court interpreter, Spanish candidates must:

- a. Enter into a personal services agreement with NCAOC to provide interpreting services to the courts; and
- b. Agree in writing to abide by the *Standards for Language Access Services in the North Carolina Court System*, including the *Code of Ethical Conduct for Court Interpreters*.

## Court interpreter certification costs

### North Carolina Court Interpreter Orientation and Written Screening Test Administration

The two-day orientation training session is currently offered at a cost of \$150.00, payable in advance to the NC Administrative Office of the Courts. This fee covers the cost of the training session as well as the rating of the written screening tests. Once accepted into the class, the registration fee is not refundable. If a candidate is accepted and fails to attend the orientation session without notifying OLAS staff, the fee will not be returned and the candidate will not receive a credit towards a later session. If a candidate gives notice to OLAS that he will not be able to attend after he has been accepted, then a credit can be applied to a later orientation training session.

If a candidate is not accepted into the orientation session, the candidate will be given the option of having the registration fee returned, or deposited and applied to a later session. Those who choose to have the fee credited to a later session will be given preference for the session of their choice, provided they submit the required registration application for that specific session by the deadline stated.

### NCCICE – North Carolina Court Interpreter Certification Examination

The registration fee to take the NCCICE is currently \$275 for in state candidates and \$375 for out of state candidates. Candidates will receive test instructions via email after an examination date and time have been assigned. Again, **candidates will not qualify to take this exam unless they successfully pass both English and non-English screening tests.** At the time of exam registration a deadline will be set for refunds. **If the deadline for withdrawal is not met, the test fee is not refundable, but can be credited to a later NCCICE administration.**

## Frequently asked questions and answers

### 1. What if I pass both written tests, register to take the exam and decide not to take it?

Candidates who pass the written screening tests and register for the NCCICE may decide not to take it. At the time of the NCCICE registration, a deadline for applications will be set. A candidate may withdraw his application and his original form of payment will be returned if the candidate withdraws before the deadline for applications. ***However, if a candidate does not withdraw by the posted deadline, the test fee will not be refunded.***

### 2. What other types of court interpreter certification does North Carolina accept?

The NCAOC considers presumptively eligible for certification any person who has successfully completed the requirements for federal court interpreter certification by passing the FCICE, the certification examination administered by NAJIT (National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators), or certification by a National Center for State Courts' CLAC member state which administers the CLAC oral proficiency examination for court interpreters. Please visit the National Center for State Courts' website at <http://www.ncsc.org/Education-and-Careers/State-Interpreter-Certification.aspx> for additional information and training resources. Eligible persons who provide required documentation may be granted reciprocity and added to North Carolina's Registry and Directory.

If an individual falls into this category, please contact the Office of Language Access Services at [OLAS@nccourts.org](mailto:OLAS@nccourts.org) or at 919-890-1407 to initiate the required paperwork for addition to North Carolina's *Registry* and *Directory*.

**3. I live in another state. May I sit for the oral Consortium exam and go through the certification process in North Carolina?**

Yes. The out of state registration fee to sit for the NCCICE is \$375.

**4. How are Spanish foreign language interpreters appointed to work in North Carolina?**

Once contracted with NCAOC, the interpreter's name and contact information will appear online on the *Registry* under the districts in which the interpreter has chosen to provide service. The *Registry* is available online and updated monthly. The appointment and scheduling of interpreters for court is a local court function, with the exception of Districts 10, 11, 14, 15B, 18, 21, 26 and 28, which have staff court interpreters. In these districts, the staff court interpreter schedules Spanish language interpreters and LOTS interpreters as needed.

**5. Whom do I contact if I have additional questions not answered in this notice?**

NCAOC's Office of Language Access Services  
919-890-1407  
[OLAS@nccourts.org](mailto:OLAS@nccourts.org)

