

INTERPRETER GUIDELINES FOR ATTORNEYS

1.	It is the responsibility of the District Attorney or defense attorney to request an interpreter for a non-English speaker who is not the defendant in a legal proceeding. Per local rule 1.32, requests must be filed with the clerk at least 10 business days before the appearance requiring the interpreter.
2.	Interpreters cannot explain or restate what you say. They can only put in another language exactly what you said.
3.	Do not interrupt or speak over others. The interpreter cannot interpret everything that is being said when two people talk at the same time.
4.	The interpreter is professionally and ethically bound to interpret everything that is said. Please do not ask the interpreter not to interpret something.
5.	When you talk with a witness or someone else through an interpreter, avoid saying things like, "Ask him if..." or "Tell him that..." . The interpreter is required to repeat those directives in the interpretation which can be confusing. Please speak directly to the person as if no interpreter were present.
6.	It takes more words to interpret a statement into Spanish, and other languages have their own unique features. Please avoid rapid-fire delivery.
7.	Simultaneous interpretation lasting more than 30 minutes requires two interpreters who alternate, or one interpreter who takes regular breaks. While everyone else is only having to understand what's being said, the interpreter has to both understand <i>and</i> convey in another language everything that is being said.
8.	Interpreters can SIGHT TRANSLATE a short document. Longer or complex documents should be translated in writing before the meeting rather than pressuring the interpreter to translate on the spot.
9.	Sometimes the interpreter needs clarification. It is unethical for the interpreter to try to guess the meaning of something that s/he does not understand and try to make up an interpretation. Please consider the request for clarification as the interpreter's commitment to accuracy, and not as a reason to cast doubt upon his/her professional credentials.
10.	When setting the pace of speech during interpreted proceedings, please consider that the interpreter cannot work at the same speed as the court reporter . The court reporter works in shorthand and does not need to transfer meaning from one language to another.
11.	With the knowledge and consent of the attorneys, interpreters need to be allowed to briefly interview the non-English speaker before the proceeding begins in order to become familiar with his/her speech patterns and linguistic traits.
12.	Attorneys should advise the interpreter as far in advance of the proceedings as possible of any special concerns they may have related to the particulars of a case. Interpreters are able to perform their duties better when they have access to documents or other information pertaining to the case.
13.	Please instruct the non-English speaker to respond ONLY after having heard the entire question interpreted into his/her own language.
14.	If the person using the services of an interpreter has questions or needs clarification, those questions and requests for clarification should be directed to the court or the attorneys through the interpreter; the interpreter is not permitted to answer questions, only to interpret them.
15.	Interpreters have an ethical obligation not to give opinions about the evolution or any other aspects of a case. Please don't ask them for their comments.
16.	If an interpreter makes an error during a proceeding, s/he has an ethical obligation to correct said error as expediently as possible. Interpreters have training on how to properly communicate their corrections.