

Language Access Committee
Videoconference Webex

May 21, 2021

Members Present

Evangelina Burrows
Yadira Call
Amine El Fajri
Judge Michael Leavitt- Chair
Chip Royce
Judge Kelly Schaeffer-Bullock
Judge Michael Westfall

Members Excused

Russ Pearson
Rory Jones

Staff

Kara Mann

(1) Welcome

Judge Michael Leavitt welcomed committee members to the meeting, and addressed the March 19, 2021 minutes. Evangelina Burrows moved to approve the minutes. Judge Michael Westfall seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

(2) Reopening Strain on Court Interpreters

Kara Mann informed the committee that she had a concern that the backlog created by the COVID-19 pandemic will create a strain on the court interpreters as Utah State Courts starts to reopen. Ms. Mann presented a proposed memo to go to the Pandemic Response Team with suggestions on reopening considerations for court interpreters. Ms. Mann shared Ms. Burrows drafted most of the proposed suggestions included on the memo.

Judge Kelly Schaeffer-Bullock advised that Justice Courts are now holding evidentiary hearings and jury trials in-person. Judge Schaeffer-Bullock asked if there will be statewide prioritization or if court interpreters will accept assignments based on which court contacts them first. Ms. Mann shared that it would currently be based on which court contacts them first. Judge Schaeffer-Bullock suggested a recommendation from the committee to the appropriate group, board, or committee to address the prioritization of cases.

Yadira Call suggested stacking trials of the same language so that if one doesn't go, then there's another trial going forward that will still require court interpreters.

After discussion, Judge Leavitt asked Ms. Mann to find out estimates on the need for court interpreters for the backlog. Judge Leavitt advised that without knowing the scope, it's difficult to submit suggestions to the Pandemic Response Team. Ms. Mann agreed, and asked the committee be willing to vote by email out of concern that reopening phase will start soon.

(3) Proposed Mentoring Program

Ms. Mann reminded the committee that at a previous meeting there was a proposal to start a mentoring program for approved Spanish interpreters as a way to address the shortage of certified Spanish interpreters. Ms. Mann shared that COVID-19 had delayed her from starting on this project. Ms. Mann presented an outline on how the mentoring program would work.

- Certified Spanish interpreters (mentors) would mentor approved Spanish interpreters (mentees).
- Mentors and mentees must meet for at least four hours over a minimum of two months and a maximum of four months.
- Mentors must observe their mentee interpreting a court proceeding two separate times and offer constructive feedback on their court interpreting skills.
- Mentors must discuss the Oral Proficiency Exam with their mentees and provide insight and tips about the exam.
- Mentors must have their mentee practice the three modes of court interpreting and provide constructive feedback.
- Mentors and mentees must sign an agreement form.
- Mentors must complete a tracking form for which they will receive four hours of continuing education credit. The mentees must sign off on the tracking form.

Ms. Mann shared proposed suggested lessons, the agreement form for both mentors and mentees, and the tracking form. Ms. Mann asked if there should be a confidentiality clause added to the agreement form for mentors and mentees.

Judge Schaeffer-Bullock suggested there be confidentiality unless there are concerns about the ethics or the interpreting ability of the mentee.

Judge Leavitt advised researching the mentoring program at the State Bar to see how situations where a mentee reports an ethics violation are handled.

Mr. Chip Royce suggested framing it as a training issue, rather than an ethics issue. Mr. Royce shared mentors might not report if there are punitive consequences to the mentee.

Judge Schaeffer-Bullock suggested researching the New Judges Mentoring Program to see how they handle ethical disclosures.

Judge Schaeffer-Bullock motioned to table the discussion until the July meeting so that Ms. Mann can research how confidentiality and ethics should be managed for a mentoring program. Judge Westfall seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

(4) Revised Conditionally Approved Interpreter Form

Ms. Mann presented the following suggested updates to the Conditionally-Approved Court Interpreter Appointment Form.

- Add the question, "If asked, can Utah State Courts share your name, email, and phone number with attorneys or other government agencies looking for an interpreter in this language?" Ms. Mann advised she receives emails asking for interpreter leads from

other agencies or attorneys regularly, but that the legal department has determined interpreters must agree to have their contact information shared.

- Change the wording from “acquired language” to “non-English language” in the question regarding schooling to clarify the question.

Ms. Call motioned to approve the form with the changes. Ms. Burrows seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

(5) Continuing Education Policy

Ms. Mann shared that she receives requests to grant continuing education hours to interpreter conferences, but that many of the sessions last less than an hour. Under the current policy she cannot grant continuing education credit for any classes that last less than one hour. Ms. Mann proposed adding the following language to section 3(D) of the policy.

1. An exception shall be granted for half-hour courses that are offered by an AOC approved interpreting conference. A half-hour segment shall be counted as half-hour of continuing education when offered by an AOC approved interpreting conference.
2. An exception shall be granted for forty-five minute courses that are offered by an AOC approved interpreting conference. A forty-five minute segment shall be counted as forty-five minutes of continuing education when offered by an AOC approved interpreting conference.

Ms. Call motioned to approve the form with the changes. Judge Schaeffer-Bullock seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

(6) Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.