

The Supreme Court of Ohio

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

FROM: Judge David Hejmanowski, Chairperson
Bruno Romero, Manager of the Language Services Program

CC: Jeff Hagler, Administrative Director
Stephanie Hess, Deputy Administrative Director
Stephanie Nelson, Director of Court Services Division

DATE: December 15, 2020

RE: Advisory Committee on Language Services – 2020 Annual Report

Pursuant to Guideline 4.03 of the Operating Guidelines for the Advisory Committee on Language Services, Judge David Hejmanowski, chairperson and Bruno Romero, staff liaison to the Advisory Committee on Language Services (Advisory Committee), hereby submit the 2020 Annual Report.

Purpose of Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to provide ongoing advice to the Court and its staff regarding the promotion of statewide rules and uniform standards on the operation of language access programs in Ohio courts; the development and delivery of interpreter services to Ohio courts, including training programs for judges and court personnel; and the consideration of any other issues the Advisory Committee deems necessary to assist the Court and its staff regarding the provision of language services in Ohio courts.

2020 Activities and Accomplishments

The Advisory Committee met telephonically on March 20, and via video on August 28, and December 11. The Advisory Committee refocused its work given the current state of affairs. First, the Advisory Committee produced a video remote interpreting bench card and updated the telephonic interpretation bench card. The Advisory Committee also worked on a strategy to expand the roster to include other qualified or language-skilled interpreters. Further, the Advisory Committee created bench cards to assist courts in identifying the categories of interpreters used in Ohio courts. Finally, the Advisory Committee identified educational

modules to be developed to assist courts in understand the mechanics of providing languages services in the legal system.

The Advisory Committee voted to present the program and the Court for consideration and dissemination of three bench cards: *Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) in Ohio Courts*, *Working with Telephonic Interpretation Services in Courts*, and *How Do I Know if a Party or a Witness Needs an Interpreter?* The purpose of these cards is to assist courts in effectively using foreign language interpreters in legal proceedings.

Additionally, the Advisory Committee identified criteria to expand the roster of foreign language interpreters in languages where certification is not available and pursuit of other credentialing is not viable since cases and the economic gains are minimal. The use of these interpreters is critical to allow individuals to understand legal proceedings and exercise their constitutional rights.

The Advisory Committee also outlined an educational strategy targeted for courts. The Advisory Committee recommended producing short vignettes in a variety of topics. These videos will address practical solutions to routine issues. Topics will include the use of interpreters in legal proceedings and ancillary matters, working with deaf parties and sign language interpreters, working with rare languages, the proper use of bilingual court personnel, and team interpreting.

Additionally, the Advisory Committee began working on revamping the interpreter training modules to make them interactive and available to all interpreters. The Advisory Committee will also resume the work that was disturbed by the pandemic. For example, a subcommittee will review interpreter compensation and billing practices.

Finally, the Language Services Program converted its rule-required training by hosting virtual sessions. The Orientation Training for Written Exam Candidates was offered June 23, 25, 30 and July 2. The course was repeated on September 16, 17, 23 and 24 and December 7, 8, 14 and 15. The program also hosted Modes of Interpretation for American Sign Language interpreters. This course was offered on September 25, October 2 and October 9. The Advisory Committee also took part in planning a Zoom webinar, *Video Remote Interpreting: Benefits and Limitations*, delivered through the Ohio Judicial College on October 9.

The Advisory Committee on Language Services and the Language Services Program will continue to work together to strengthen access to justice for every limited-English, and deaf and hard of hearing person in Ohio.