



Language Interpreter Certifications and Credentials Accepted by the New York State Courts

Reciprocity Provisions for the NYS Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters

(Updated July, 2010)

The New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) has developed and administers examinations for interpreters seeking to be listed in its Registry of Per Diem Court Interpreters. At present, the **Language Assessment Testing Program** offers examinations consisting of a written English proficiency test and a **bilingual** oral exam in **English and 22** designated languages-- Albanian, Arabic, BCS (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian), Bengali, Cantonese, French, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi (Eastern), Russian, Spanish, **Urdu**, Vietnamese and Wolof.

These tests are used by court administrators to identify competent interpreters for per diem assignments in the New York **State** Courts. (Oral exams are being developed in additional languages.) Candidates for per diem assignments in languages for which no oral exam is presently available must pass the written English proficiency test and provide additional verifiable evidence of competency in the indicated language. OCA also conducts a separate competitive examination every four years for the employment of full-time permanent Spanish Court Interpreters.

Interpreters possessing out-of-state court interpreter certification may apply for state reciprocity for the Registry designated languages or other languages subject to specific conditions (i.e., minimum educational requirements, professional training and experience, and a criminal history check). Unless otherwise indicated, examinations that will be considered comparable to tests currently conducted by the NYS Office of Court Administration must evaluate an applicant's proficiency in English and in their foreign language through standardized testing. In addition, the oral examination components of the certification test must include testing in all three modes of interpreting - consecutive interpreting, simultaneous interpreting and sight translation.

Reciprocity

Candidates may apply for reciprocity in any language, without having to undergo the Language Assessment Testing Program's examinations (written English test and oral test), if they have been certified by at least one of the following credentialing authorities:

1) Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination Program (FCICE)

Federal Court Certification is provided by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. Certification is presently available only for Spanish, although certification exams were previously available in Haitian Creole and Navajo. For more information about this program please refer to the program's website at:

http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/Consort-interp/fcice_exam/index.htm

2) Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification (Consortium)

State certification examinations are conducted by member states through the National Center for State Courts. New York State became a member of the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification in 2005. OCA will accept the results of a consortium developed examination administered by a member state. Specifically, applicants must have obtained a minimum score of 80% on the Written Test and a minimum score of 70% on each section of the Oral Performance Test. While the Consortium has developed examinations **with varying components** in **19** languages: **Arabic, BCS (Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian), Cantonese, Chuukese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Marshallese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese**), not all participating states administer the full range of language tests available. Information about the Consortium testing program and related links can be found on the National Center for State Courts website at: http://www.ncsc.org/D_Research/CourtInterp.html

3) National Judiciary Interpreter and Translator Certification (NJITC)

The NJITC program is offered by the National Association of Judicial Interpreters and Translators (NAJIT). Candidates can earn NAJIT certification by passing both the written and oral components of the examination. The certification examination is currently offered only in Spanish. Information about the NAJIT-sponsored testing program, including testing dates, is on the NAJIT website at: <http://www.najit.org>

4) The Judicial Council of California-Master List of Certified Interpreters

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) for the State of California conducts a court interpreter certification program that requires candidates to pass both a written English fluency examination and an oral test currently offered in 12 designated languages (i.e., Spanish, Arabic, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese). Candidates who pass both examinations and register with the Judicial Council are placed on the "Master List of Certified Interpreters of Designated (tested) Languages." Information about California's Court Interpreter Certification program can be found on their website at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/courtinterpreters/becoming.htm>

Request for Waiver of the Written English Proficiency Examination Requirement in New York State

As outlined above, Court Interpreters who speak a language other than one of the **22** designated Registry languages must also pass a written English proficiency exam before they can be considered for per diem assignments. As of January 1, 2007, failure to demonstrate English proficiency by an approved examination will restrict an individual from providing interpreter services in the New York **State** Courts.

Candidates seeking a waiver of New York's written English proficiency examination may submit proof that they have passed an English proficiency test through at least one of the four credentialing authorities identified above (i.e., FCICE, Consortium, NAJIT, and the Judicial Council of California).

In addition to these organizations, OCA will also accept as evidence of sufficient English proficiency, performance on the TOEFL iBT (Internet version) introduced in 2005 and

administered by the Educational Testing Service. Candidates must obtain a minimum score of 90 (scores range from 0 to 120) on the TOEFL iBT. Visit the TOEFL Web site at www.ets.org/toefl for more information about this examination.

Applying for Examination Reciprocity or Waiver

Each request for reciprocity or waiver will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Out-of-state certifications must be current in the issuing state or federal program at the time of the request. Abridged examinations and conditional/alternative or temporary certifications will not be accepted. **In instances where a request for reciprocity or waiver is not granted, applicants will be required to pass the written English proficiency test and, as appropriate, either the foreign language oral exam, or provide verifiable evidence of competency in the indicated language.**

Applicants seeking a waiver of examination and/or registration reciprocity should **submit a completed Application for Language Skills Screening (ALSS) indicating the language(s) in which they wish to provide court interpreting services**, and the attached **Examination Waiver/Reciprocity Form**. The ALSS is available online at: <http://www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter/pdfs/applicationLanguageScreening.pdf> **The Examination Waiver and the ALSS** should be submitted with certified copies of examination results, certifications and/or credentials that can be verified. No fee is charged for this examination waiver review. However, if your credentials are accepted, you will be required to pay **a fee for the required criminal history background check**.

Please mail **all completed forms** to:
Office of Court Interpreting Services
Office of Court Administration
New York State Unified Court System
25 Beaver St, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10004

If you have a question about New York's Court Interpreter Program please call: (646) 386-5670 or visit our website: www.nycourts.gov/courtinterpreter

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