

# Maryland Interpreter



*The Maryland Court Interpreter Program is committed to providing the Maryland Judiciary with highly qualified and trained interpreters to ensure equal access to justice to all limited English proficiency individuals who seek it.*

### Inside this issue:

<b>Interpreters as Cultural Guides</b>	2
<b>Canon 8 in Review</b>	2
<b>Language of the Month</b>	2
<b>Personality Does Matter</b>	3
<b>Red Brick Courthouse</b>	3
<b>Maryland Court Interpreter Protocol</b>	4

## Spring 2009 Interpreter Workshops and Tests

The Court Interpreter Program Spring 2009 Workshop and Testing cycle is in full swing. Prior to workshops and tests, the staff at the Program conducted a recruiting drive with the purpose of reaching out to local ethnic communities and identifying talented bilingual individuals who would be interested in serving as court interpreters. Our efforts paid off with quite a diverse crowd at the Introductory Workshop in March.

The primary objective of the Introductory Workshop is to introduce candidates to the court interpreting profession, the history of the Maryland Court Interpreter Program, the Code of Conduct for Maryland interpreters, and modes of interpreting.

The candidates who

attended the workshop were subsequently invited to take the Court Interpreter Written Test in English, which measures knowledge of English language, court-related terms and usage, court interpreter ethics and professional conduct. These three areas are central to the work of a court interpreter. This rigorous test is considered one of the most challenging components of the testing process and an important screening tool in making sure the Program recruits the best candidates.

We are proud to announce that approximately 50% of the candidates who took the exam in the spring of 2009 have passed it.

Their next task was to pass the Language Proficiency Interviews (LPI) in English and foreign languages. The interview does not test the

candidates' interpreting skills, but rather assesses their ability to express ideas and communicate effectively at various levels of complexity.

The final requirement for those who passed all the tests is to attend a 2-day Mandatory Workshop on May 16-17. The workshop topics cover various aspects important to working court interpreters, including **law, ethics, interpreter protocol, specialized vocabulary, introduction to wireless equipment, three modes of interpreting, note-taking techniques,** and many others. Upon completion of the workshop, the participants will be listed on the Maryland Court Interpreter Registry as 'eligible interpreters'.

The spring 2009 testing season has been very successful and we are looking forward to welcoming new candidates in the fall of 2009.

## News and Announcements

### *Fall 2009 Workshops and Testing Dates*

- 1-Day Introductory Workshop** - August 29 or August 30, 2009
- Written Exam (language neutral)** - Sept. 29, 30 and Oct.1, 2, 2009
- Language Proficiency Interviews** - Oct. 2009
- 2-Day Court Interpreter Orientation Workshop** - Nov.14 -15, 2009

Visit our site at [www.mdcourts.gov/interpreter/](http://www.mdcourts.gov/interpreter/) for more information and application

## When Interpreters Act as Cultural Guides

You find yourself interpreting a court proceeding involving a limited English proficiency person from your home province of your native country. Half-way through the testimony, you feel strongly that the Court is not getting a clear picture of the defendant's testimony even if your interpretation is flawless. The defendant failed to mention an important cultural tradition, common in your country, which had been the real reason behind the defendant's actions. You are the only person in the courtroom who can help the defendant and clear his name.

You also happen to be a professor at the local university teaching a

course on said culture and language. Do you speak up and offer your expert opinion?

Never! Although it is natural to feel inclined to speak up, interpreters must monitor themselves carefully. As a court appointed interpreter, you must always remain neutral in all proceedings. Your role does not include acting as an expert witness, regardless of how helpful or relevant you think your opinion might be. The only situation in which you might



provide your cultural explanation outside of the official interpretation is when the judge specifically asks you to do so.

Please refer to **Canon 4, The Scope of Practice**, of the Maryland Code of Conduct for Court Interpreters. Offering cultural explanations and opinions is incompatible with the ethical and professional standards to which interpreters must adhere. So please always remember to maintain your neutrality when interpreting in the courts.

## Canon 8 in Review: Assessing and Reporting Impediments

**Interpreters shall assess at all times their ability to deliver their services. When interpreters have any reservation about their ability to satisfy an assignment completely, they shall immediately convey that reservation to the appropriate judicial authority.**

Always notify the Court if:

- You can't hear or understand the speaker
- Parties speak too fast for you to be able to interpret adequately
- You feel you need a break to prevent fatigue and to maintain mental alertness
- You don't feel well and as a result, are unable to concentrate
- The case involves unanticipated technical or specialized terminology that exceeds your skills
- There are environmental conditions (e.g. the courtroom is not quiet enough) that hinder your ability to interpret

## Language of the Month

...is Byelorussian, or White Russian in literal translation (no relation to the popular cocktail). There are several million people who consider Byelorussian their native tongue, yet it is considered a rare language and its speakers are hard to find. Although closely

related, Russian and Byelorussian are two different languages and not interchangeable. Both languages along with Ukrainian derived from the Old Slavonic spoken in the early medieval state of *Kiev Rus*. Numerous conquests of the area by neighboring states brought changes to the Old Slavonic language which gradually developed into separate dialects. Over time, Byelorussian has emerged as an independent language. In the 18th century,

Belarus became part of Russia and, later, the Soviet Union. As a result, Byelorussian culture and language have become practically extinct. It only remained spoken in families and was briefly taught in schools. Since Belarus became an independent state in 1991, Byelorussian has gained much popularity. It has been reviving and gaining its strength as a fully fledged national language of Belarus.

## Personality Does Matter

When describing personalities, people usually refer to the most common aspects of human character: an overall demeanor, behavioral patterns when relaxed or under stress, manners, social adjustment, emotional reactions, etc.

Psychologists add various other factors to this list, such as physiological characteristics, genetic traits, innate cognitive abilities, and natural talents. Does an interpreter's personality have an effect on his or her overall performance? Of course!

Dr. John Oldham (Why You Think, Work, Love, and Act the Way You Do. Rev.ed. New York: Bantam, 1995) places the profession of an interpreter under the Conscientious personality type and here are some of its characteristics:

- People of the Conscientious type are hard workers of strong moral principles and values.

- They believe that everything must be done "right" and in accordance with directives.
- They strive to live up to people's expectations of them and are ready to sacrifice their time and energy.
- People of the Conscientious type like the appearance of order, detail and tidiness.
- They are careful, prudent, and will never act recklessly.
- They are polite, friendly, warm, and understanding.

Clients who use interpreters on a regular basis often praise some interpreters over others not only for their interpreting skills, but also for their ability to remain composed, friendly, patient, and professional in stressful interpretation settings.

In court, interpreters have the duty to act as the linguistic conduit between the court and the Limited English Proficiency person. Their role is to make that person

"present" in the courtroom and to offer them the opportunity to hear and speak. This task requires superior interpreting skills and personal characteristics that allow these skills to shine.

The interpreter's level of self-confidence and assertiveness is extremely important in insuring proper working conditions and responding to challenges. Additionally, it takes a great deal of self-confidence to admit your own mistakes and the fact that you can't know it all. If challenged, a professional interpreter will handle the problem in a calm, dignified manner and in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Upon completion of the assignment, a professional interpreter will gracefully leave without engaging into an informal "after-interpretation-when-the-pressure-is-off" chat with attorneys or, even worse, their clients.

Does this describe you, interpreter? Then you are in the right field!

## Red Brick Courthouse

If you ever happened to be at the Montgomery County Circuit or District Court, you may have noticed a red brick building right in the center of the Judicial Center.

For most of Montgomery County's history, a single building, familiarly known as the "Courthouse" served all functions of local government. The Red Brick Courthouse reflects lifestyle and daily routine of the residents of rural Montgomery County in the 1800s. Residents visited the

courthouse as litigants and jurors, to pay taxes, buy dog tags, probate wills, obtain marriage and business licenses, and record deeds. The courthouse changed with the times, in use as well as appearance. In 1990, Peerless Rockville, a nonprofit historic preservation group, formed "Friends of the Red Brick Courthouse" to raise funds to restore the grand courtroom to its 1891 appearance. Private donations and public funds removed the



unsympathetic alterations and restored original materials. Work was completed in 1995 and the grand courtroom returned to use with the Circuit Court Trial Court on January 18, 1996.

So next time you are on your way to the Circuit or District court in Rockville, note the red brick building in the Courthouse Square. Step back in time and imagine you are in 1890 on your way to the courthouse to register your newly acquired cow.

## Maryland Court Interpreter Protocol

### *Maryland Court Interpreter Protocol and Guidelines*

*Acceptance of an interpretation assignment in the Maryland courts is a serious commitment. Interpreters, as officers of the court, are required to adhere to the Maryland Code of Conduct for Court Interpreters to ensure Limited English Proficiency individuals have equal access to justice and fully participate in the proceedings.*

- Please arrive for your assignment at least 15 minutes early to allow sufficient time for parking and passing through security at the courthouse.
- Make sure to sign in with the interpreter coordinator **before** proceeding to the courtroom. **Once in the courtroom, please immediately advise the courtroom clerk of your presence and provide case information.**
- The court is a formal environment and you should maintain an appropriate level of formality with court personnel, attorneys, etc. **Always dress professionally. Business attire is required.** Do not use heavy perfume, cologne, make-up, or excessive jewelry.
- Be formal when addressing parties in court (i.e. 'Your Honor', 'Counselor', 'Mr./Mrs.', 'Doctor', 'Professor').
- Bring a notepad and a pen to the court to take notes while interpreting. All interpreters should bring a legal glossary and a bilingual dictionary with them to their assignments.
- The interpretation must be conducted in the first person. Speak in the voice of the person you are interpreting for; never use 'she said' or 'he said'.
- Always refer to yourself in the third person, as 'the interpreter'. This is important for accurate transcriptions of the hearing. For example, if you need the speaker to repeat the sentence, you should address the Court in the following manner: **"The Interpreter requests the last statement to be repeated."**
- Should you come across an unfamiliar word, request the Court's permission to look it up in the dictionary: **"The Interpreter requests the Court's indulgence to look up a word in the dictionary."**
- Interpret all English language proceedings simultaneously using wireless equipment provided by the court coordinator. The consecutive mode of interpreting should be used only during direct testimony and without the equipment.
- When interpreting, make sure to provide an accurate interpretation in a loud and clear voice without embellishments, omissions, or editing, while maintaining the tone and register of the speaker.
- Inform the Court immediately if you make an error in interpretation in the following manner: **"The interpreter would like to make a correction."**
- Inform the Court immediately if there is any real or perceived conflict of interest (i.e. you are acquainted with or related to parties in the case or if you have an interest in the outcome of the case) in the following manner: **"Your Honor, may the interpreter approach."**
- Under no circumstances should you converse with either the attorneys or the party you are interpreting for. This appearance of impropriety is unacceptable and can be grounds for dismissal.

#### Newsletter

#### Maryland Court Interpreter Program Administrative Office of the Courts

Please write to:

Ksenia Boitsova

Court Interpreter Program Administrator

*The Maryland Interpreter*

Maryland Court Interpreter Program

2001-D Commerce Park Drive

Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: 410-260-3569

Fax: 410-260-3570

You can find our newsletter at:

<http://mdcourts.gov/interpreter/>