

A Maryland Judiciary Production  
*My Laws, My Courts, My Maryland*  
**Need a Court Interpreter?**

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**Intro:** The Maryland Judiciary provides trained interpreters for court proceedings and services for people with limited English. This service is free of charge. In this video, we will talk about when a court interpreter may be appropriate. We will address whether you may be eligible for a court interpreter. We will explain how to request a court interpreter and what you can expect during your court appearance. Finally, we will talk about how you may communicate with court staff when you are not in the courtroom.

**When Are Interpreters Appropriate?** The Maryland Judiciary provides interpreters for all hearings and court proceedings that take place in a courtroom. The court also provides interpreters for services referred or ordered by the court. For example, the court provides interpreters for certain court-ordered screenings, assessments, and evaluations. Or, if the court has ordered mediation in your case, the court will provide an interpreter for that mediation session. A list of court events for which the court may assign an interpreter is at [mdcourts.gov/courts/courtlanguageservices](http://mdcourts.gov/courts/courtlanguageservices).

**Who can request interpreting services?**

Interpreters are provided free of charge for persons who are parties, witnesses, a victim or victim's representative in a Maryland court case. Court interpreters are available for civil, criminal, and juvenile proceedings. Only court-appointed interpreters may serve as official interpreters in the courtroom. Family or friends cannot serve as court interpreters.

### **How to Request an Interpreter**

If possible, request an interpreter for your hearing 30 days before your court date. That may not always be possible, but try to request one as early as possible. This may help avoid having your case postponed if an interpreter is not readily available.

Fill out a Request for Spoken Language Interpreter, Form CC-DC-041. The form is available in English and in several different bilingual formats. The bilingual forms combine English with Spanish, Russian, French, Korean, and Chinese. Regardless of the form you use, complete it in English.

If you are requesting a sign language interpreter, use the Request for Accommodation for Person with Disability, Form CC-DC-049. If your case is being heard at Baltimore City Circuit Court, please visit [baltimorecitycourt.org](http://baltimorecitycourt.org) for more information.

The forms are available at the court's information desk and online at [mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov). You may also ask your attorney, a friend, or a family member to fill out the form for you. You may also get help filling out the form at a court self-help center. Submit the form by mail or in person to the clerk's office of the court where your hearing will take place.

If you are a party in the case, you need only submit a single Request form. Once the court receives your first request, it will assign an interpreter for all court proceedings at which

you are expected to appear. The process is different for victims, witnesses, or other interested persons in a case. Those persons must submit a new Request form for each court appearance.

Finally, what if you no longer need an interpreter? You must notify the court. If you do not, you may be charged for the cost of the interpreter.

### **What to Expect**

At your court hearing or event, the interpreter may speak with you beforehand. He or she wants to make sure that you can understand each other. Also, court interpreters often use special equipment in the courtroom: a transmitter and a receiver. The interpreter will explain to you how to use that equipment.

In the courtroom, the interpreter will interpret everything you say into English, and will use the first person or say "I" when translating your words for the court. He or she will also interpret everything that is said during the hearing into your language. The interpreter will always refer to himself or herself as "the interpreter."

If you do not understand something during the court proceeding or event, immediately tell the judge through your interpreter. Sometimes, the interpreter may ask for the judge's permission to speak to you. He or she may then ask you to repeat or clarify your statement. There may be times that you speak too fast or give long answers. The interpreter may ask you to slow down or to pause to allow for interpretation.

The court provides interpreters for interpretation services only. The interpreter cannot give you legal advice or explain court proceedings. Do not ask your interpreter questions about your case. Do not ask about what will happen in court. Court interpreters are not allowed to

answer those types of questions. If you have questions, you may speak to your attorney or to the judge. The interpreter will interpret the answers for you. Also, interpreters may not have private conversations with you or your family.

### **How to Communicate with Court Staff**

The court provides interpreters during court hearings and proceedings. There may be times when you want to communicate with court staff outside of those hearings. For example, maybe you need to speak to the court clerk about filing documents. Or, you may have questions for the clerk. The Maryland Judiciary offers free telephone interpretation at clerk's offices. To help you ask for a telephone interpreter, courts have I-SPEAK Cards or Language Line Posters which display different languages. Either say the name of the language you speak or point to your language on the card or poster. The court employee will arrange for an interpreter to assist you by phone.

### **Recap**

Remember, the court provides interpreters for all court hearings and proceedings. You may also request an interpreter for certain court-related events such as evaluations or screenings. Parties, witnesses, victims and victim's representatives in civil, criminal, and juvenile cases may request court interpreters. If possible, submit a "Request for a Spoken Language Interpreter" 30 days before your hearing date. On the day of your proceeding, the interpreter may have equipment for you to use. He or she may ask you to speak more slowly or to repeat

some of your answers. Finally, to communicate with court staff, ask court employees for an interpreter to assist you by phone.

This has been a production of the Access to Justice Department of the Administrative Office of the Courts. For more information, see [mdcourts.gov](http://mdcourts.gov).