



In-Person Interpreting During the Pandemic

Court Language Access Services
Oregon Judicial Department

Introduction	2
Traveling to and from an interpreting assignment:.....	2
Simultaneous interpreting in-person.....	2
Consecutive interpreting in-person	3
Privileged in-person communication.....	3
An in-person interpreting Case Study.....	4

Introduction

While remote interpreting is the best way to avoid being exposed to COVID-19, some matters must still be interpreted in-person. The Chief Justice's order gives each Presiding Judge discretion to order that a trial, hearing or proceeding be conducted in-person if sufficient social distancing can be maintained. The Chief's order also provides that the court can order reasonable precautions to protect the health of the participants, including victims, interpreters, and court staff.

Procedures and protocols for conducting in-person hearings during the pandemic may vary from county to county and courtroom to courtroom. The interpreter must evaluate the interpreting needs of each hearing and be prepared to advise the court on appropriate interpreting technology and procedures.

At all times, the interpreter must obey the orders of the court and adhere to their duty under the [Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in Oregon Courts](#).

If the court deems it necessary for you to provide your services in person, please follow these general recommendations.

Traveling to and from an interpreting assignment:

- Keep a safe distance from others (as of 3/27/2020—a minimum of six feet per the Chief Justice's Order)
- CLAS highly recommends that interpreters wear a protective face covering while traveling to and from an interpreting assignment and while in the courthouse. In fact, the presiding judge in most judicial districts has ordered the use of protective face coverings while inside their court facilities.
- Learn how to safely put on and take off face coverings and gloves (if you wear them).
- Enter the courthouse only when needed and don't congregate there. (consider staying in your car as an isolation base when you are on a duty block)
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid touching shared court equipment (e.g. pens, microphones, stands, lecterns, the "interpreter phone"). You may want to consider wearing gloves while in the courthouse.
- Avoid using public transportation.

Simultaneous interpreting in-person

CLAS believes that the safest way for an interpreter and interpreter teams to provide simultaneous interpreting in person is through the use of wireless interpreting equipment and recommends some additional precautions:

- To facilitate clear communication, the interpreter may need to remove their face covering while interpreting. The interpreter should exercise professional judgment as to when this might be appropriate. If the interpreter does decide to remove their face covering, they should request permission from the judge.
- The interpreter should maintain appropriate social distancing from hearing participants, the public and other interpreters (as of 3/27/2020—a minimum of six feet per the Chief Justice's Order).
- While CLAS owned interpreting equipment is still available to sign out, interpreters should consider bringing their own interpreting equipment to assignments. Interpreters should consider:
 - Buying their own equipment, and
 - Buying extra microphone wind-guards/pop-filters.

- The interpreter must disinfect the transmitter, microphone(s), receiver(s), headphone(s) and batteries before each use—then wash their hands.
- Interpreters should not share microphones.
 - Use one microphone for each member of the interpreting team.
 - When team members switch places, unplug the microphone and disinfect the transmitter before exchanging it.
- The interpreter must disinfect each headphone and receiver set before giving it to an LEP user.
- If LEP users refuse to use the headphones and receiver, the interpreter should advise the court and ask for guidance.
- The interpreter should avoid touching shared court equipment such as notepads, pens, microphones, stands, lecterns, etc.
- The interpreter must disinfect the transmitter, microphone(s), receiver(s), headphone(s) and batteries after each use—then wash their hands.

Consecutive interpreting in-person

- The interpreter should assess the environment they are going to interpret in. If there are concerns, the interpreter should make them known and ask the judge for help resolving them.
 - To facilitate clear communication, the interpreter may need to remove their face covering while interpreting. The interpreter should exercise professional judgment as to when this might be appropriate. If the interpreter does decide to remove their face covering, they should request permission from the judge.
 - The interpreter should be positioned in a safe location, as of 3/27/2020, that means a minimum of six feet away from others per the Chief Justice’s Order (e.g. in the jury box, in the gallery, several steps away from counsel table, behind the glass at a counter).
 - The interpreter may want to advise the judge that, for social distancing purposes, they will be using the consecutive mode.
- The interpreter should be positioned near enough to a courtroom microphone to ensure that their voice is picked up for the FTR recording.
- Consecutive mode interpretation can be used to avoid having to use the same set of headphones on several LEP participants.

Privileged in-person communication

When the interpreter is in-person, appropriate social distancing makes the usual heads together whispered consultation huddle problematic.

- Some judges ask the party and their attorney to move to a separate area to allow for private communication with adequate spacing.
- Other judges order the courtroom cleared and the FTR turned off allowing the confidential communication to occur in the courtroom.
- Another option is for the interpreter to establish a 3-way call between the interpreter, the attorney and the LEP client through the interpreter’s private phone. The 3-way call is interpreted in the consecutive mode at a volume that is not audible to others. The interpreter should block their phone number from appearing on the receiver’s phone by entering code *67 followed by the attorney and LEP client phone numbers (e.g. *67-503-986-1234)

An in-person interpreting Case Study

Recently, I worked in a courtroom that had a strict “face mask” policy. I wore my face mask in the courtroom until the case I was assigned to interpret for was called. At which time I requested permission to remove my face covering. The judge allowed it. I continued to follow other social distancing protocols: standing 6 feet from other participants and using the hand sanitizer provided by the court before and after removing my mask.

In my experience judges have been very understanding and accommodating especially when they see interpreters demonstrating professionalism and a concern for public safety.