



OREGON JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT

Office of the State Court Administrator

September 21, 2011

(SENT BY EMAIL)

TO: Oregon Court Interpreters

FROM: Court Interpreter Services (CIS)
Kelly Mills, Program Manager
Max Christian, Interpreter Analyst

RE: **Interpreting Concerns When the Court Interpreter Is Asked to Interpret on Standby**

CIS Standby Interpreting Guideline:

CIS recommends that you, the interpreter, inform the Court and the parties of the “complete and accurate” requirement of the *Code* and of the potential practical difficulties if you are asked to be on standby, so that the Court may make an informed decision in answer to a standby interpreting request. Unless specifically instructed by the Court, court interpreters should not interpret on standby.

The *Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters in the Oregon Courts* requires that you, the court interpreter, render “a complete and accurate interpretation or sight translation, without altering, omitting anything from, or adding anything to what is stated or written, and without explanation.” You will be precluded from so doing if you are on standby.

For example, the typical standby scenario involves an individual who is relatively comfortable with English but likes to have an interpreter on standby in order to potentially clarify something which he or she may not have understood. Often the individual waits for a break or until the hearing is over and then expects the interpreter to summarize and clarify part(s) which may not have been understood. Such summarization and clarification, tantamount to explanation, is outside of a court interpreter’s allowed scope of practice.

While CIS discourages provision of interpreters on a standby basis due to these concerns, we also recognize that the court has many factors to keep in mind when making procedural decisions. Only the Court may allow an exception to the rule that interpretation be complete and accurate.