



U.S. District Courts

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Three Categories of Interpreters

Certified interpreters

Certified interpreters have passed the Administrative Office certification examination. To date, certification programs have been developed for Spanish, Navajo and Haitian-Creole. In these languages, the courts will select interpreters who have met the Administrative Office's criteria for certification if the judge determines that certified interpreters are reasonably available.

The Administrative Office's [Spanish-English Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination](#) is administered in two phases. Candidates must pass the written exam in order to qualify to take an oral examination. The oral examination measures a candidate's ability to accurately perform simultaneous as well as consecutive interpretation and sight translations as encountered in the federal courts.

For other languages, individuals may contact local federal courts to determine if that court has a need for the language of expertise. The [local federal court](#) will determine on a case-by-case basis whether the prospective interpreter is either professionally qualified or language skilled. In languages other than Spanish, Navajo and Haitian-Creole, interpreters are designated as:

- professionally qualified and
- language skilled.

Professionally qualified interpreters

To be considered as a professionally qualified interpreter, an individual must submit a resume to the court, detailing education, training experience, current telephone number and mailing address, and when applicable, membership accreditations as described below.

There are two ways in which one can be designated as professionally qualified. Individuals who can demonstrate to the local court that they are eligible in either of these two ways can be classified as "professionally qualified."

1. Previous employment as a conference or seminar interpreter with any United States agency or with the United Nations or a similar entity may be deemed professionally qualified if the condition for employment includes successfully passing an interpreter examination; or
2. Membership in good standing in a professional interpreter

association that requires:

- a. a minimum of 50 hours of conference interpreting experience in the language(s) of expertise and
- b. the sponsorship of three active members of the same association who have been members for at least two years and whose language(s) are the same as the applicant's, and who will attest to having witnessed the applicant's performance and to the accuracy of the statements on the application.

Language skilled interpreters

Interpreters who are not certified (Spanish, Navajo, or Haitian-Creole) or considered professionally qualified, as described above, but who can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the court their ability to effectively interpret from the foreign language into English and vice versa in court proceedings, can be classified as "language skilled" interpreters.

Certified and professionally qualified interpreters are paid at a higher rate than language skilled interpreters.
