

COWLITZ COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT AND COUNTY CLERK JOINT INTERPRETER POLICY

The Cowlitz County Superior Court and County Clerk are committed to providing access to justice for all persons. Acknowledging that persons who speak a language other than English require special consideration to ensure meaningful access to the courts, the Superior Court and the County Clerk adopt the following interpreter policy.

The purpose of the policy is to provide notice to those in need of interpreter services in domestic and other civil cases that such assistance is available, to provide a mechanism whereby interpreter services can be easily and effectively requested, and to develop a uniform means for permanently identifying cases where the services of an interpreter are required and coordinated.

Absent good cause shown the Court will provide interpreter services at public expense in civil cases only if the litigant is indigent. In all other civil cases the hiring of an interpreter shall be the responsibility of the litigant. The Court may assist in providing a list of appropriate interpreters.

This policy does not apply to the use of interpreters for the hearing impaired. The Court will fully comply with the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Interpreter services for the hearing impaired will be provided without cost by the court.

A. NOTICE. Notices will be posted in locations designed to best alert the public on the right to request interpreter services and the procedures for obtaining such services. The notices will be printed in Spanish and English and will direct readers to request assistance at the County Clerk's Office

B. REQUEST FOR INTERPRETER SERVICES. The Court and the Clerk will jointly develop a "Request for Interpreter Services" form that will be printed in both English and Spanish. The form will be located in the office of the County Clerk. The purpose of the form is to alert the Interpreter Coordinator that interpreter services are needed. It is the intent of the Court and the Clerk, to the extent reasonable and possible within available resources and existing technological limits, to track interpreter requests so subsequent requests are not required and schedulers will know in advance which persons require the assistance of an interpreter.

C. MONITORING NEED. As with all court services, the Court and the Clerk will monitor interpreter needs in order to adequately allocate budgetary resources on a yearly basis.

D. STAFF TRAINING. The Court and the Clerk will provide training to staff as to this joint policy so it may be properly implemented and monitored.

E. INFORMATION ON THE WEB. For the convenience of web users the Clerk may add any information contained herein to the Cowlitz County Clerk of the Court web site.

F. OPERATIONAL/PROCEDURAL ISSUES SPECIFIC TO JUVENILE COURT.

1. Notices will be posted in the juvenile court lobby, detention lobby, and in strategic locations within the Juvenile Justice Center to best alert the public of their right to request interpreter services and procedures for obtaining such services. The notices will be printed in Spanish and English (and any other language deemed necessary) and will direct readers to request assistance at the Juvenile Court front office or Juvenile Detention Center-control room (the detention center will develop its own protocols for scheduling interpreter services within the detention center).
2. Upon determining a client's (to include parent/guardian) need for interpreter services, staff should follow this procedure:
 - a. Notify the proper clerk (BECCA, Offender, Dependency, etc.) to schedule interpreter services for the pending legal proceeding.
 - b. The clerk will then schedule an interpreter. All legal parties to the case in need of interpreter services should receive a certified interpreter. Non-parties, i.e., parents in an offender matter should receive a qualified interpreter.
 - c. At the initial hearing, the interpreter will be provided with notice of the next hearing date by the Court.
 - d. If hearing dates are changed outside of the interpreter's presence, the person requesting the change is responsible to provide notice of the change to the interpreter(s).
3. Juvenile Probation staff is responsible for coordinating interpreter services for youth assigned to their caseload for the purpose of conducting probation meetings, program participation, and to the extent interpreter services are necessary to support the duties associated with case management and client supervision.
4. It is the responsibility of the diversion unit coordinator to schedule interpreters for diversion cases. Diversion cases will be afforded interpreter services subject to available funds.
5. Staff should use a qualified interpreter for all matters or situations not part of a legal proceeding. This includes diversion meetings, participation in detention, participation in court-sponsored programs, and probation meetings.

6. Juvenile Court Staff should adhere to sections A-E listed above as applicable to the operations of the Juvenile Court.

Dated: May 6, 2008

Stephen M. Warning
Superior Court Presiding Judge

Roni Booth
Cowlitz County Clerk