

INTERPRETER COMPENSATION STUDY REPORT



WeAmplifyit
Language Access Consulting



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Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

Washington State is home to a diverse range of individuals with a growing population of residents with limited English proficiency (LEP). According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management, the percent of the population age 5 and above living in households where English is spoken less than "very well" has risen from 2.7% in 1980 to 7.9% in 2021.¹ Additionally, the Washington State Department of Health and Social Services used data from the 2008 American Community Survey to report that roughly 4% of Washington State residents are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.² In acknowledging the need for language services in the courts, the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and the Washington State Courts remain committed to providing language access services for LEP and Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind (D/HH/DB) individuals who come to court through the use of spoken language interpreters and sign language interpreters.

Court interpreters play an integral role in ensuring access to justice for LEP and D/HH/DB individuals. By bridging the communication gap between LEP or D/HH/DB participants and the English-speaking court system, interpreters ensure that LEP and D/HH/DB court users can meaningfully participate in courts at the same level as English-speaking court users would. To do this, court interpreters must not only have native-like fluency in both working languages. They must also have mastered complex interpretation skills, have a broad range of vocabulary, including legal terminology, and have an understanding of the legal process.

The majority of court interpreters working in Washington State are contract court interpreters who independently contract with the local courts for assignments on an as-needed basis. The volume of work can be unpredictable depending on the language and, as independent contractors, court interpreters are not eligible for work benefits provided to other court staff. Additionally, while there is some similarity in the types of contract court interpreter assignments across the state, local courts have various ways in which they schedule, contract, and pay interpreters based on local policies and procedures.

The AOC supports Washington's non-unified courts and their language access efforts by credentialing spoken language interpreters and providing training and resources to the courts to support their work with interpreters. While the AOC as part of a non-unified judicial system

¹ For more information, see: <https://ofm.wa.gov/washington-data-research/statewide-data/washington-trends/social-economic-conditions/language-spoken-home>.

² Information obtained from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-154.pdf>. Note that this date is from several years ago and the percentage of Washington individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing may have shifted in recent years. Publicly available information was not found on the percentage of Washington State residents who are Deafblind.

has limited ability to establish statewide payment policies for court interpreters, the AOC has conducted previous studies and reports to review court interpreter compensation rates, payment policies, and the ongoing challenges faced by courts in hiring credentialed interpreters. Key findings from these studies have indicated a growing demand for credentialed interpreters statewide, escalating costs associated with interpreting services, and a persistent shortage of qualified interpreters.

In recognizing the ongoing challenges faced by courts in hiring contract court interpreters, the AOC contracted with We Amplify It (WAI) to conduct a comprehensive interpreter compensation study. The purpose of this study is to determine a practical, fair compensation model that could be implemented for court interpreters and identify recruitment strategies to enhance language access in Washington State Courts.

Methodology

To accomplish this study, WAI conducted research from November 2023 to June 2024. The research included qualitative and quantitative techniques to collect and analyze data on opportunities, challenges, and suggestions regarding contract court interpreter compensation as well as other aspects such as scheduling, acceptance, recruitment, retention, and related practices. Specific research techniques included:

- A comprehensive review and analysis of data from courts participating in the AOC Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP) for Fiscal Year 2022 (July 2021 - June 2022) and Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022 - June 2023);
- Surveys conducted with courts and targeted contract court interpreters;
- Focus groups conducted with court administrators and contract court interpreters in Spanish, other high-demand languages, and languages of lesser diffusion;
- A landscape review of contract court interpreter rates and compensation practices in eighteen states with high volumes of interpretation and those geographically close to Washington state; and
- Complementary research of payment rates and compensation trends for other interpreting work, as well as a review of language industry trends.

Key Findings

Contract court interpreter pay rates vary

Through a comprehensive review of LAIRP data, surveys, and focus group responses, it was found that court interpreter pay rates vary significantly across the state. Key factors contributing to these variances include court location (urban vs. rural), language, and credentialing status.

Based on the LAIRP data, the overall average hourly rate paid by the courts for spoken languages among credentialed languages was **\$65.63** for credentialed interpreters and **\$64.01** for non-credentialed interpreters. Rates for spoken language interpreters in languages for which credentialing does not exist was slightly higher at **\$75.77** per hour. Hourly rates for ASL interpreters were slightly higher than those for spoken language interpreters, with courts paying ASL credentialed interpreters **\$77.71** per hour and non-credentialed ASL interpreters an average of **\$101.32** per hour.

Average hourly rate ranges also varied widely within high-demand languages by interpreter credentialing status. There is significant variation in average hourly rates paid by the courts for non-credentialed contract court interpreters, compared to their credentialed counterparts. However, the higher rates for non-credentialed interpreters may reflect the inclusion of agency fees, indicating that the actual amount the interpreter receives may be lower than what the court pays.

It is important to note that credentialed status tends to provide a more consistent hourly rate over time, as opposed to the wide variations seen with non-credentialed interpreters later in the study. This consistency can be crucial for interpreters who rely on stable and predictable pay rates for their work.

Courts and contract court interpreters negotiate rates

Results indicate that some courts have fixed rates, which they do not negotiate, while other courts negotiate rates for each assignment. Additionally, data indicates that interpreters with more years of experience and interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion have the highest rates of negotiation. During focus groups, interpreters noted that negotiations are not limited to rates only, but that contract court interpreters also negotiate travel time, mileage, parking, and hourly minimums.

Courts and contract court interpreters are open to statewide standardized pay ranges and payment policies

Survey and focus group results indicate that courts generally support the idea of standardized contract court interpreter rates across the state, with a preference for a standardized range that can vary based on court location and interpreter languages.

Interpreters' opinions on standardized rates vary by language, with Spanish interpreters being the least interested in a standardized rate. However, additional details from focus group sessions reveal that interpreters are more open to statewide pay ranges if the rates are fair. The primary motivation for those in favor of standardized rates is the potential to be scheduled for half-day or full-day assignments. Many open-ended contract court interpreter's survey responses also highlighted that a competitive or higher pay rate than currently offered would be a key motivator for adopting standardized pay ranges.

Pay rates for contract court interpreters in Washington remain competitive when compared to other states and industries

A review of court interpreter payment policies in other states revealed that Washington State's hourly rates are comparable to or higher than those in other states. Additionally, court interpretation work in Washington often pays more than publicly advertised rates for other interpreting work in the state, such as medical interpreting assignments. However, it should be noted that some other states and the federal court system offer half-day and full-day blocks of scheduled time, which interpreters reported as preferable.

Furthermore, while other interpreting work, such as medical interpreting assignments appear to pay less hourly, the volume of advertised work remains high and could be a competitive marketplace for interpreters needing to fill out their portfolios with more consistent volume of work.

It is also worth noting, as highlighted by the AOC, that out-of-state job requests tend to pay more due to their urgent nature and the inability to fill these needs locally. However, these requests are infrequent and may represent a small percentage of overall assignments.

Employment opportunities for interpreters are expected to continue growing

Research shows that there is a projected 4% employment growth for interpreters and translators by 2032. This may result in more bilingual or interpreting job opportunities, which could create competition for the Washington courts.

Scheduling and Contracting

Contract court interpreters value relationships and communication when scheduling and contracting with courts

The surveys and focus groups results indicate that while the majority of court assignments came through direct contact from a court, some of the larger urban courts use scheduling portals and mass emailing to disseminate open assignments. Interpreters participating in the focus groups indicated a strong preference for scheduling through relationships and direct contact and noted dissatisfaction with mass emails about contract court interpreter assignments.

Preference for remote interpretation varies

Remote interpretation assignments continue to grow statewide, and the preference for remote assignments varies based on language. According to the contract court interpreter survey, Spanish interpreters slightly prefer in-person assignments over video remote interpretation (VRI). However, interpreters in other high demand languages report a preference for remote assignments, while interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion report no major difference in their preference.

Pay is the most influential factor in accepting an assignment

Both surveys revealed that the pay rate is the most frequently mentioned factor influencing the decision to accept an interpreting assignment. Other significant factors include the frequency of work and flexibility. Interpreters also highlighted additional considerations such as job stability, work environment stress, and personal schedule and availability. Furthermore, in open-ended responses, interpreters noted that location, travel time, and distance also play a role in their decision to accept an assignment.

Recruitment and Retention

Compensation is a significant factor for recruitment and retention, but being treated as a professional is also important

The majority of survey respondents indicated that competitive compensation is the priority suggestion for recruitment, contracting, and retention. In focus groups, interpreters also emphasized the importance of being respected by the courts as highly skilled professionals as a key component for retention. Additionally, interpreters reported valuing relationships with the court and court interpreter coordinator, noting that such relationships can assist with recruitment, contracting, and retention efforts.

Other interpreter pipeline development efforts were highlighted

Survey responses also pointed to additional initiatives that the AOC and courts could implement to attract potential court interpreters into the pipeline and support interested candidates in developing and improving their skills. Suggestions included offering training programs, mentoring initiatives, and educational outreach to schools and community organizations. Additional recommendations included conducting outreach to language classes in schools, providing incentives for experienced interpreters to mentor prospective interpreters, and encouraging courts to hire interpreters directly rather than through agencies.

Recommendations

An essential component of this study was to assist with establishing competitive hourly pay ranges that could be utilized by courts statewide. The report reviews current and historical pay rates for court interpreters across the state, as well as rates for court interpretation and similar work in other states and industries. This research led to the following recommended hourly pay ranges for court interpreters for FY2025:

Recommended Hourly Rate Ranges		FY2025 (7/2024-6/2025)	
Credentialed Spoken Language Interpreters		\$70-\$85	
Credentialed ASL Interpreters		\$85-\$100	

In addition to recommending increases in contract court interpreter rates for FY2025, the report suggests ongoing monitoring of national court interpreter pay and rates across other industries. Continuous monitoring and analysis can help maintain competitive rates, attracting and retaining qualified contract court interpreters who might otherwise prioritize other opportunities. Monitoring pay rates and industry trends can also enhance recruitment efforts of new interpreters, fostering a robust pipeline of future court interpreters.

Because compensation encompasses more than just the hourly rate an interpreter may receive, the report also outlines several recommendations to support improvements in the overall compensation and contracting processes employed by the courts. To enhance the experience and attract qualified interpreters, Washington courts could consider:

- **Travel reimbursements:** Including mileage, travel time, and parking for in-person assignments, reducing interpreters' financial burden.
- **Scheduled blocks of work:** Offering half-day and full-day options, especially for in-person work, allowing interpreters to focus on court assignments rather than piecing together work from different sources.
- **Expanded remote opportunities:** Providing more remote interpreting options where feasible and appropriate for the case, offering flexibility and reducing travel time.
- **Simplified contracting:** Standardizing scheduling practices, contract templates, and invoices to streamline the contracting process for both interpreters and the courts.
- **Professional treatment and recognition:** Recognizing interpreters' expertise by offering dedicated break areas, preparation time, and employee access privileges. fostering a professional environment.
- **Funding:** Seeking additional LAIRP funding to provide sufficient reimbursement and adequately counterbalance the increased budgetary burden on courts.

Finally, the study proposes strategies to address the ongoing shortage of qualified interpreters. To optimize the current pool, it recommends exploring scheduling efficiencies, such as interpreter calendars, which could be used to assign interpreters scheduled for a block of time to handle additional in-person or remote court assignments within the same location or for other courts. To build the future pipeline of interpreters, the report suggests continued outreach and marketing efforts to attract new talent, along with training and mentoring initiatives to support the development of future court interpreters.

This study underscores the dedication of the AOC to enhancing court interpreter services and ensuring equitable access to justice for all individuals. As a non-unified system, the AOC may face some limitations in implementing compensation policies and practices statewide.

Therefore, the recommendations in this report have been crafted to highlight the AOC's role in providing courts with guidance, tools, and support, as well as to outline local court policies and practices that can improve the contract experience for court interpreters throughout the state. By providing a comprehensive analysis and actionable recommendations, we hope to assist courts in their ongoing commitment to justice and fairness. We trust that these efforts will contribute to a more efficient and just legal system for everyone.

Background

2. Background

The AOC in Washington State contracted with WAI to conduct a comprehensive study aimed at addressing the challenges associated with providing court interpreter services in Superior Courts and Courts of limited jurisdiction. The study objectives were:

- **Assess Current Compensation Rates and Payment Policies:** Evaluate the existing compensation structures for contract court interpreters, both for in-person and remote assignments, and identify any disparities and challenges.
- **Examine Recruitment and Retention Strategies:** Analyze the current recruitment and retention strategies employed by the courts and identify potential areas for improvement to attract and retain qualified contract court interpreters.
- **Recommend an Hourly Rate for Contract Court Interpreters:** Provide a recommended rate that courts could use as a reference, aiming for consistency across the courts while accounting for regional language demand, varying budgets, and other influencing factors.
- **Propose Recommendations to Enhance Language Access Services:** Recommend strategies to improve the overall effectiveness of language access services, ensuring equitable access to justice for all individuals, regardless of language proficiency.

Previous discussions and studies conducted over the past six years have shed light on the landscape of contract court interpreter services in the state. Surveys and studies have examined aspects such as interpreter availability, compensation rates, payment policies, and the persistent challenges faced by courts in hiring credentialed interpreters. Notably, a virtual forum was convened in February 2023 with local court administrators statewide to discuss challenges and potential solutions regarding contract court interpreter compensation and scheduling issues.

Key findings from these discussions and studies indicate a growing demand for qualified interpreters statewide, escalating costs associated with interpreting services, and persistent scarcity of qualified interpreters, particularly for languages of lesser diffusion and rural counties. Efforts to leverage resources through remote technology, such as Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), and implementing policies to incentivize interpreters have been explored.

It is evident that addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. As such, this interpreter compensation study report seeks to build upon previous findings and recommendations to develop effective strategies for enhancing language access in Washington State Courts.

Definitions

3. Definitions

1. **American Disabilities Act (ADA)** – A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities (from [ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov/)).
2. **American Sign Language (ASL)** – A visual language used predominantly in the United States and in many parts of Canada. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information. Sign language is not a universal language — each country has its own sign language, and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like any spoken language, ASL is a language with its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. Like all languages, ASL is a living language that grows and changes over time (from [National Association of the Deaf](https://www.nad.org/)).
3. **Certified Interpreter** – An interpreter who is certified by the Administrative Office of the Courts. (from [RCW2.43](#)).
4. **Consecutive Interpretation** – A mode of interpreting where the interpreter waits until the speaker has finished before rendering speech into another language. Consecutive interpreting is a true and accurate interpretation of one language to another, spoken in brief sound bites successively, without omissions or embellishments, so that the parties can understand each other slowly and deliberately (from [NAJIT Modes of Interpreting](#)).
5. **Court Interpreter** – Someone who interprets in a civil or criminal court proceeding (e.g., arraignment, motion, hearing, deposition, trial) for a witness or defendant who speaks or understands little or no English. Court interpreters must accurately interpret in the simultaneous and consecutive modes for individuals with a high level of education and an extensive vocabulary, as well as persons with very limited language skills without changing the language register of the speaker. Interpreters are also sometimes responsible for sight translating written documents, often of a legal nature, from English into the target language and from the target language into English (from [Washington Courts FAQs](#)).
6. **Court Credentialed Interpreter** – For spoken languages, an interpreter is credentialed by the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts as either a Certified interpreter or Registered interpreter. The following 44 languages are considered

credentialed languages: Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Burmese, Chinese-Cantonese, Chinese-Mandarin, Czech, Dari, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Ilokano, Japanese, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Kurdish-Kurmanji, Laotian, Marshallese, Oromo, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog (Filipino), Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba.

A roster of credentialed ASL and Deaf Interpreters is maintained by the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). Interpreters maintained on the ODHH roster are certified through national organizations, including the Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). Interpreters on the ODHH roster either hold the Specialist Certificate: Legal (SC:L) or they have passed the Knowledge Exam portion of the SC:L and other performance exams. Some interpreters also hold the Certified Deaf Interpreter Certification (CDI).

7. **Deaf** – Having partial or total hearing loss.
8. **Deafblind** – Combined hearing and vision loss (from [National Center on Deafblindness](#)).
9. **Hard of Hearing** – Hearing loss ranging from mild to severe (from [World Health Organization](#)).
10. **Interpretation** – The act of listening, understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken communication in one language (source language) and then faithfully orally rendering it into another spoken language (target language) while retaining the same meaning. For individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH), this can include understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed communication in the source language and faithfully conveying that information into a spoken or signed target language while retaining the same meaning (from [Department of Justice Language Access Plan](#)).
11. **Interpreter** – An interpreter works with the spoken word, converting speech from a source language into a target language. This is far more than speaking two languages fluently. The interpreter must also communicate the style and tone of the speaker, while taking into account differences of culture, dialect, and setting. The listeners should hear the interpreted message as if it had been originally spoken in their own language (from [American Translator's Association](#)).

12. Language Access - Means providing Limited English Proficient (LEP) people with reasonable access to the same services as English-speaking individuals. The two main legal bases for language access are Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on national origin, and 2000's Executive Order 13166, which affirms Title VI's language access requirement and outlines additional requirements. In some cases, individual states and municipalities have enacted their own language access regulations. Some regulations largely reinforce Title VI and EO13166, while others include specifics regarding the language access planning/implementation (from [Migration Policy Institute](#)). Language access also means providing access to courts for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind (D/HH/DB) individuals, where the reasonable accommodation requested is a sign language interpreter. The legal authority to provide interpreter services for D/HH/DB individuals comes from the ADA, State law, and court rule (from [Deskbook on Language Access in Washington Courts](#)).

13. Limited English Proficient (LEP) – Describes individuals who:

- a. do not speak English as their primary language; and
- b. have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.^[67]
- c. may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (e.g., reading or writing). LEP designations are also context-specific; an individual may possess sufficient English language skills to function in one setting (e.g., conversing in English with coworkers), but these skills may be insufficient in other settings (e.g., addressing court proceedings). An individual who is D/HH/DB may also have limited proficiency in spoken or written English and may not be proficient in ASL or any other recognized sign language (from [Department of Justice Language Access Plan](#)).

14. Registered Interpreter – To become a spoken language registered court interpreter in Washington State, a person must pass an English written exam and an oral proficiency interview (OPI) which tests the person's ability to speak and comprehend the non-English language. The OPI does not test interpreting abilities (from [Washington Courts LAP](#)).

15. Sight Translation – The rendering of material written in one language into spoken speech in another language. It is a true and accurate verbal translation of written

material into the spoken form so that the parties can understand what documents written in foreign languages say (from [NAJIT Modes of Interpreting](#)).

- 16. Simultaneous Interpretation** – The rendering of one spoken language into another when running renditions are needed at the same time as the English language communication. The interpreter speaks virtually at the same time as the LEP person (from [NAJIT Modes of Interpreting](#)).
- 17. Translation** – The process of converting written text from a source language into an equivalent written text in a target language as fully and accurately as possible while maintaining the style, tone, and intent of the text, while in light of differences of culture and dialect (from [Department of Justice Language Access Plan](#)).
- 18. Pay Rate** – This term refers to how the contract court interpreter is compensated, which can include hourly, half-day, or full-day rates. In this report, hourly rate is a type of pay rate.
- 19. Qualified Interpreter** – A general term to represent the idea that an interpreter is qualified to work in a particular setting. This term is used in this report in comparative contexts for state systems or industries that may have different classification and/or qualifying structures for interpreters. In Washington courts, interpreters are credentialed as certified or registered interpreters (see [RCW 2.43](#)).
- 20. Video Remote Interpretation (VRI)** – A video telecommunication system that uses devices such as computers, web cameras, or videophones to provide spoken or sign language interpreting services to court users through a remote or off-site interpreter (from [National Center for State Courts](#)).

Methodology

4. Methodology

The report employed a mixed methods approach to address the research objectives comprehensively. It combined qualitative and quantitative techniques to collect and analyze data on opportunities, challenges, and suggestions regarding contract court interpreter compensation in addition to other aspects such as scheduling, acceptance, recruitment, retention, and related practices.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, these findings were validated by triangulating data from multiple sources (AOC Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP) Dataset, AOC Contract Court Interpreter Survey, AOC Contract Court Interpreter Focus Groups, AOC Court Administrator Survey, AOC Court Administrator Focus Group) and employing rigorous data analysis techniques (data cleaning, inclusion/exclusion criteria, descriptive and inferential statistics, collaborative synthesis, and data interpretation) to ensure reliability.

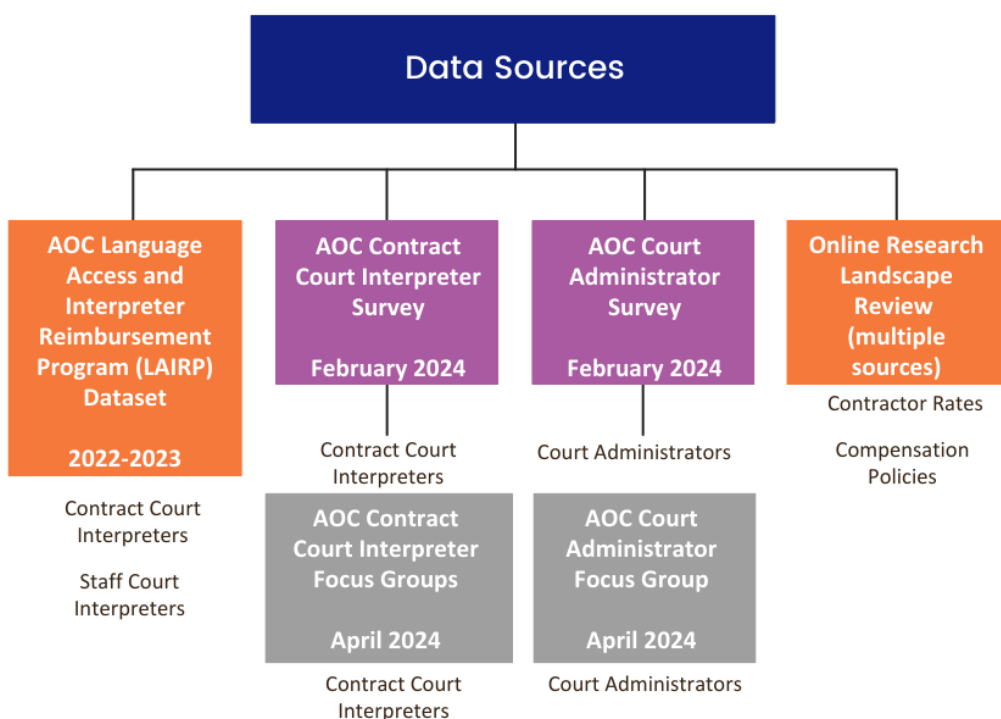


Figure 1: Sources of Data Used in the Study

The following assumptions were made throughout the different stages of data collection and analysis:

- Publicly available data accurately reflects contract court interpreter compensation practices in eighteen states and at the federal level.

- Accurate data was reported in the AOC Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program from Fiscal Year 2022 (July 2021 - June 2022) and Fiscal Year 2023 (July 2022 - June 2023) from courts participating in the program.
- Data gathered in surveys and focus groups were accurate and comprehensive to participants' experiences with interpreter services.

To understand the difference between hourly rates paid and hourly rates received throughout the report, the following distinctions should be made:

- **LAIRP data:** hourly rates are defined as what courts pay to provide the cost of interpreting services; this may include interpreting agency fees.
- **Survey data:** what interpreters reported receiving; this does not include interpreting agency fees.

This study was conducted from November 2023 to June 2024 with data collection, analysis, and reporting stages clearly defined to meet project deadlines.

Online Research: Federal and State Contract Court Interpreter Rates and Compensation Policies

The project began with an extensive online research endeavor focusing on federal and state contract court interpreter rates and compensation policies. This research included a landscape review of contract court interpreter rates and compensation practices in eighteen states in the nation with high volumes of interpretation and those geographically close to Washington state, including:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| • Arizona | • North Carolina |
| • California | • New Jersey |
| • Florida | • New Mexico |
| • Georgia | • Nevada |
| • Idaho | • New York |
| • Illinois | • Oregon |
| • Massachusetts | • Pennsylvania |
| • Maryland | • Texas |
| • Minnesota | • Utah |

State court systems reviewed in the research included states with unified court systems with statewide payment policies for court interpreter assignments, as well as non-unified or

decentralized court systems for which court interpreter compensation is decided by the local courts. The research aimed to gather publicly available information on the following aspects:

- Hourly rates, including any pay differentials based on certification levels (e.g., certified vs. registered interpreters).
- Hourly rates and pay differentials for remote vs. in-person interpreting services.
- Hourly minimums for interpreting assignments.
- Policies regarding travel reimbursement for contract court interpreters.
- Cancellation policies.
- Any other accommodations noted, such as pay differentials for languages of lesser diffusion.
- Additionally, preliminary research involved reviewing contract court interpreter or staff interpreter work advertised for Washington State and surrounding areas, including Oregon. This review encompassed various fields such as court interpretation, other legal work, medical interpretation, and community interpretation, with a focus on languages in high demand in Washington State (i.e. Spanish).

Furthermore, a broader investigation was conducted into other professions requiring advanced linguistic skills nationally to gauge the demand for such skills in different sectors.

AOC Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP) Dataset

The study also involved cleaning and analyzing four datasets for Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 from the AOC LAIRP. For each year there were two datasets- one for contract court interpreters, and one for staff court interpreters. These datasets provided information on courts, types of reimbursement, hourly rates, languages, types of services provided, and more.

Contract Court Interpreter Dataset

The contract court interpreter dataset included entries based on invoices that represented interpreting events. The variables are: court name, county, fiscal quarter, fiscal year, event date, language interpreted, hourly rate, event length in hours, service type (i.e., in-person or remote-Phone-Video or Cancellation), mileage, travel_time, case type, participant type (i.e. CLJ - Defendant (DEF), CLJ - Victim (VCT)), certification status (yes= certified or registered, no= non-credentialed), travel time hourly rate, other expenses, and cost of other expenses.

The following changes were made to the dataset for analysis:

- 'Region' was added to the dataset, with values as Eastern or Western.
- 'Certified' was renamed to 'Interpreter Credentialed', since it was confirmed that a value of 'yes' is defined as the interpreter for that assignment being certified or registered.
- 'Credentialed Language' was added to the dataset, with values as Credentialed or Non-Credentialed. If a language is eligible to be certified or registered by the AOC, the value 'Credentialed' was assigned.

There were 120 assignments excluded from the contract court interpreter analysis based on the following criteria: Telephonic Interpreting was listed as an 'other expense', the hourly rate was less than \$20 or more than \$1,000, or the event (assignment) length was more than 24 hours. This resulted in 54,111 assignments for analysis versus the original 54,231 included in the final dataset for analysis. These criteria were determined based on discussions with the AOC on what values were outside of range and categorized as significant outliers found through data exploration.

Staff Court Interpreter Dataset

The staff court interpreter dataset included entries based on invoices from courts' quarterly reports. The variables are court name, county, fiscal quarter, fiscal year, event date, language interpreted, hourly rate, service type ((i.e., in-person or remote-Phone-Video, Cancellation, or Combination of All), certification status (yes= certified or registered, no= non-credentialed), and total salary paid.

In FY2022 and FY2023, 8 (21%) of Washington's counties worked with staff interpreters across 10 courts. The total salary paid in FY2022 and FY2023 was \$747,478.99. This decreased by 23% from \$423,397.92 in FY2022 to \$324,081.07 in FY2023. Staff salaries were not reported on an individual level, so it isn't possible to determine the average salary or hourly rate for staff interpreters, and what specifically led to this decrease in total salary paid since FY2022. Therefore, further analyses were not included in this report.

Data Analysis

Through the development of an interactive Excel Dashboard, the analysis of this data aimed to gain insights into the current landscape of language interpretation services within Washington State courts, with a specific focus on how compensation varied by language interpreted, credentialing status, county, region, and fiscal year. The data was cleaned and aggregated using Excel Power Query and analyzed in Excel.

The analysis for the AOC LAIRP focuses on the following questions:

- How many courts were represented in the AOC LAIRP?
- How many languages were represented in the AOC LAIRP?
- How many in-person assignments versus remote assignments?
- How many assignments are completed by credentialed versus non-credentialed interpreters (Interpreter Credentialed variable)?
 - How does this vary by if a language is eligible for credentialing or not (Credentialed Language variable)?
- What was the average hourly rate?
 - How does the hourly rate vary by language interpreted?
 - How does the hourly rate vary by the court?
 - How does the hourly rate vary by the county?
 - How does the hourly rate vary by service type (in-person vs remote)?
 - How does the hourly rate vary by the interpreter's credentialing status?
- What was the average event (assignment) length, mileage, travel time, and travel time hourly rate?

Surveys and Focus Groups

Two surveys were conducted as part of the methodology: one targeting courts and the other targeting contract court interpreters. Both surveys were open from February 15 to 29, 2024. The court administrators survey garnered responses from 95 participants out of approximately 170 participants (response rate of 56%), while the contract court interpreter survey received 202 responses out of approximately 400 survey recipients (response rate of 50%). It is noted that some contract court interpreters from the AOC roster may have been inactive at the time of the survey.

Survey responses were exported from SurveyMonkey to analyze the AOC Court and Court Interpreter surveys. Excel was used to calculate the cross-tabulations and descriptive statistics and conduct any statistical analysis.

In addition to surveys, four focus groups were convened, including one for court administrators and three for contract court interpreters between April 1 to 11, 2024. The three contract court interpreters focus groups were divided into Spanish, high demand, and lesser diffusion languages, as detailed in the Analysis & Finding section. One court administrator and one contract court interpreter were interviewed independently due to availability, but the findings from their interviews were included in the comprehensive focus group analysis and results. These focus groups provided valuable qualitative insights into the challenges and perspectives of both courts and contract court interpreters regarding interpreter compensation and related issues.

The analysis for this data concentrated on the following research questions:

Compensation

- How do contract court interpreters' satisfaction levels with hourly rates paid by the courts align with their overall job satisfaction?
- What are the perceptions of contract court interpreters regarding implementing a set court interpreting rate offered by all courts statewide?
- How do contract court interpreters perceive the adequacy of their compensation for interpretation work in Washington State Courts compared to other interpreting assignments?
- What are the primary motivations for contract court interpreters to negotiate hourly rates the courts offer for interpreting assignments?
- How does the frequency of negotiating hourly rates with courts vary by interpreter satisfaction levels?

Scheduling and Accepting Assignments

- What factors influence contract court interpreters' decisions to accept or decline interpreting assignments in Washington state courts?

Recruitment and Retention

- What strategies could local courts and the AOC implement to attract and retain more contract court interpreters to the court interpreting profession in Washington state?

Ethical Considerations

We adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from survey and focus group participants and ensuring confidentiality of responses to minimize potential risks to participants' privacy. Certified interpreters were provided with 1.5 educational credits through the AOC's Court Interpreter Program.

Analysis & Findings

5. Analysis & Findings

Contextual Analysis: Language Access at Washington State Courts

Legal Framework

Limited English Proficient Individuals

As stated in the Administrative Office of the Courts' [Deskbook on Language Access in Washington Courts](#), "both federal and Washington law require that courts provide all LEP individuals with qualified³ interpreters during all legal proceedings, meaning court hearings, trials, and motions in which an individual has the right to participate as a party or witness."

Specific federal and state statutes include the following:

Federal statutes require the provision of interpreter services to LEP individuals in courts. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq. (Title VI), and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 3789d(c) (Safe Streets Act), both prohibit national origin discrimination by recipients of federal financial assistance.

Washington State's interpreter statute, Interpreters for Non-English Speaking Persons, RCW 2.43.010, declares that it is the policy of the State "to provide for the use and procedure for the appointment of interpreters to secure the rights, constitutional or otherwise, of persons who, because of a non-English-speaking cultural background, are unable to readily understand or communicate in the English language, and who consequently cannot be fully protected in legal proceedings unless qualified interpreters are available to assist them."

The Department of Justice (DOJ) issued in 2002 *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, which states that courts receiving federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that all LEP individuals have meaningful access to all court proceedings and court-related programs and activities.⁴ In 2010, the DOJ also issued a

³ "Qualified interpreter" is a general term to represent the idea that an interpreter is qualified to work in a particular setting. In Washington courts, interpreters are credentialed as "certified" or "registered" interpreters. Further discussion of interpreter qualifications including credentials is defined in detail in subsection C, below.

⁴ See: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/doj-final-lep-guidance-signed-6-12-02>

letter to state courts clarifying that courts that receive federal financial assistance must provide language services to LEP individuals.⁵

Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind

As stated in the [Deskbook on Language Access in Washington Courts](#), the legal authority to provide interpreter services for Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Deafblind (D/HH/DB) individuals comes from the American Disability Act (ADA), State law, and court rule.⁶ The ADA differs from the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in that the ADA mandates apply not just to recipients of federal financial assistance, but to all state and local government activities regardless of federal financial support.

Washington State Statute RCW 2.42 governs the delivery of interpreter services for D/HH/DB persons in Washington courts.

Courts must ensure that all services provided or offered in the courthouse are accessible to D/HH/DB individuals. This includes points of contact outside of the courtroom, such as the clerk's office, as well as other programs operated from within the court building.

Provision of Language Access Services

The Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) provides support to the state's non-unified courts. As a non-unified court system, the local courts throughout Washington state are responsible for all local court operations, which includes scheduling qualified court interpreters for criminal and civil court matters. The local courts are also expected to develop and follow local language access plans (LAPs) and to develop local policies and practices for the provision of interpreter services for LEP and D/HH/DB individuals. The LAPs developed by local courts should include the court's practices and protocols for the following:

- Notifying LEP and D/HH/DB individuals of the right and methods to obtain an interpreter, other language assistance, and emergency information.
- Identifying and assessing the language needs of LEP and D/HH/DB individuals in the court.
- Identifying and appointing interpreters.
- Providing translations of commonly used forms.
- Training judges and court personnel.

⁵ See: <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-issues-guidance-letter-state-courts-regarding-their-obligation-provide>

⁶ Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§12101-12213 (2000)), Revised Code of Washington 2.42, and GR33.

- Gathering and reporting data.
- Monitoring and ensuring compliance with the development and implementation of the LAP, and
- Providing a complaint process.

While local court language access services may vary, the AOC has published the [Deskbook on Language Access in Washington Courts](#) to provide guidance on a range of strategies such as multilingual signage, translation efforts, the use of telephonic and video remote interpretation, language access training, and data collection. The AOC also supports the trial courts in their efforts to provide language access and interpreter services.

The AOC's Court Interpreter Program is responsible for the training and testing of spoken language interpreters used statewide. The AOC also coordinates statewide training for courts on language access policies and the use of court interpreters.

Additionally, the AOC provides reimbursement to courts participating in the LAIRP to support courts in ensuring effective language access while alleviating a portion of the financial burden on courts. Under this program, 50% of the cost of qualifying interpreter events and staff interpreters is reimbursed, while 100% of all other approved language access costs are covered (in Fiscal Year 2024).

In Fiscal Year 2024, the AOC LAIRP contracted with 111 courts covering 37 counties across Washington to provide reimbursement for the cost of interpreter services and other language access related expenses.

In addition to its support of the local courts' language access services, the AOC provides staff support to the Interpreter and Language Access Commission (ILAC), which establishes and promulgates guidelines on interpreting, translation, and language access matters affecting individuals who are Limited-English-proficient or who use a signed language. The ILAC is composed of a range of court staff and stakeholders, including, but not limited to judicial officers, court administrators, interpreters, translators, attorneys, representatives of community organizations, and members of the public.

The AOC received legislative funding for the 2023-2025 Biennium to conduct requirements gathering, analysis, and an options analysis to determine the most efficient option for developing or procuring a statewide interpreter scheduling application. This work is ongoing.

Court Interpreters' Profession

Court interpreters play a fundamental role in ensuring access to justice for LEP and D/HH/DB court users, acting as the conduit of communication between the English-speaking court, including court staff, attorneys, and judicial officers and the LEP or D/HH/DB court user. Court users work throughout the court in both criminal and civil case types, interpreting for witnesses, defendants, attorneys, and judicial officers.

To ensure meaningful communication for the LEP and D/HH/DB court users and the court, professional court interpreters must have an educated, native-like mastery of both English and the non-English language in which they are interpreting. They must have an expansive vocabulary in both languages, including knowledge of legal terminology and the linguistic equivalent of terms in both languages; idioms, sayings, and colloquialisms; and a wide range of subject-specific terminology that may come up during court cases.

While bilingualism is fundamental to court interpretation, being bilingual alone is not enough. In addition to the knowledge and understanding of both English and the non-English language, court interpreters must also be able to accurately interpret using three modes of interpretation commonly used in court: sight translation, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting.⁷

To develop the complex set of skills needed for court interpretation, court interpreters often need to study and train for many years. Additionally, while the credentialing process for court interpretation does not require an advanced degree, many interpreters pursue higher education. A survey of over 500 interpreters conducted by the American Translators Association (ATA) indicated that the majority of survey respondents (63%) reported having a master's or doctorate degree.⁸ This highlights the high level of education common among professionals in the interpreting field, including court interpreters.

With respect to Washington State, AOC has two classifications of credentialed court interpreters for spoken languages: certified court interpreters and registered court interpreters. Certification is currently available in the following 13 languages for which full oral court interpreter performance exams are available:

⁷ For a full list of the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for court interpretation, see: <https://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/KSAs.pdf>.

⁸ For more information, see the ATA's Interpreters Division Survey Report: <https://ata-divisions.org/ID/wp-content/uploads/reports/Survey-ATA-ID-May-2015-Report-Board-Graphics-10222015.pdf>

- Arabic (Egyptian or Levantine)
- Mandarin
- Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian
- Portuguese
- Cantonese
- Russian
- French
- Spanish
- Khmer (Cambodian)
- Tagalog
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Laotian

To become certified, interpreter candidates must take and pass requisite written and oral exams. They must also attend an orientation session prior to taking the oral exam and attend a mandatory court interpreter ethics class.⁹

The AOC currently has registered interpreters in the following languages:

Amharic, Armenian, Burmese, Czech, Dari, Dutch, Farsi, German, Greek, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Ilocano, Japanese, Kurdish-Kurmanji, Marshallese¹⁰, Oromo, Polish, Portuguese*, Punjabi, Romanian, Samoan, Somali, Swahili, Tagalog*, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Yoruba.

**Portuguese and Tagalog are transitioning from a registered to a certified language, so there are currently interpreters in both categories.*

To become registered, interpreter candidates in the languages listed above must pass the requisite written exam and speaking and listening comprehension exams in the non-English language. Candidates must also attend an orientation program and a court interpreter ethics class.

Interpreters of American Sign Language (ASL) obtain certification through the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH). To obtain certified ASL court interpreters, courts are directed to use the list of approved interpreters maintained by the ODHH. The interpreters included on the ODHH list either hold the previously administered legal certification for ASL interpreters, the Specialist Certification: Legal (SC:L), or they have passed the written exam of the SC:L and passed a performance exam administered by the Registry of the Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).¹¹ The ODHH list also includes a list of Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs).¹²

⁹ For more information, see:

https://www.courts.wa.gov/programs_orgs/pos_interpret/index.cfm?fa=pos_interpret.display&fileName=certifiedInterpreters

¹⁰ Marshallese was categorized as a registered language and analyzed with other credentialed languages at the time of the analysis.

¹¹ The SC:L continues to be recognized by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), but the designation went into moratorium effective January 1, 2016. For more information, see <https://rid.org/about/certifications-under-moratorium/>.

¹² For more information, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/odhh/certified-court-sign-language-interpreters>.

As of June of 2024, the AOC has listed a total of 357 spoken language credentialed court interpreters. As of June 2024, the ODHH lists a total of 12 ASL interpreters with the SC:L and an additional 7 ASL interpreters who hold RID Certification and who have passed the written exam of the SC:L. Additionally, the ODHH lists 7 CDIs and 1 Qualified Deaf Interpreter.

The majority of the spoken language and ASL court interpreters in Washington work as independent contractors (freelance interpreters). The work of contract court interpreters is scheduled by local courts on an as-needed basis. Contract court interpreters are typically paid hourly, and they are not eligible for court employee benefits as independent contractors, nor are they guaranteed a stable or consistent schedule. Depending on the language and demand for services, contract court interpreters may need to work for many courts throughout the state, as well as provide interpreting services for other industries in order to make a full-time living as an interpreter.

Due to the complex nature of court interpretation, the number of credentialed interpreters in many languages is limited and, as such, the demand for court interpreters often outpaces the supply of qualified individuals able to perform the services. Additionally, due to both the growth in language services in other industries, as well as the increase in remote and virtual work, interpreters who may have traditionally worked in only local courts may now also interpret remotely for courts in other counties and states, as well as providing interpreting services for the private legal sector and medical industries. This has resulted in a competitive landscape in which there is a growing demand for a shrinking workforce.

Federal and State Contract Court Interpreter Rates and Compensation Policies

To assist with identifying recommendations for contract court interpreter pay rates and compensation policies, WAI reviewed publicly available information related to federal and state contract court interpreter payment.

The eighteen states reviewed vary in terms of having statewide policies that govern interpreter payment. Some states have standardized policies and pay rates for court interpreters statewide. While these states may still negotiate rates for some languages, standardized pay rates by hour or block of time are typically included in publicly available materials. In other states, local courts are responsible for establishing court interpreter payment and rates. For some of these states, the Administrative Office of the Courts in that state may provide

guidance or general information regarding what may be expected in terms of payment to interpreters.

An overview of publicly available information indicates that hourly interpreter rates for contract court interpreters can range from \$30-\$100 per hour for credentialed court interpreters, including interpreters who have passed requisite exams and achieved classifications similar to the AOC's Certified or Registered status. Non-certified/non-credentialed interpreters are typically paid less across states, with ranges from \$20 - \$90 per hour.

The federal courts and some of the states reviewed have policies or guidance in place to pay contract court interpreters in accordance with hourly minimums. This also ranges with some states having two-hour minimums, while others offer four-hour minimums (or half-day/full-day rates).

States with standardized payment policies also often included payment policies for court interpreter travel. Travel reimbursement rates often follow federally accepted or state-approved mileage rates and in many cases the policy references other travel policies in place for government work.

Additionally, states with standardized contract court interpreter compensation policies and rates also provided information on cancellation policies. Most states listing cancellation policies provide payment to contract court interpreters equivalent to the assignment if a court cancels the interpreting event with less than 24 hours' notice. Some courts offer payment if the cancellation occurs with less than 48 hours of notice before assignment. Additionally, at least one state (New York) indicated that if the canceled assignment was scheduled for multiple days, such as for a trial, the interpreter would be paid for the first day only, at the full or half-day rate, as applicable.

Of particular interest are contract court interpreter payment policies in effect in the federal courts, the Oregon Judicial Department, and the California Administrative Office of the Courts, as these were all noted by Washington contract court interpreters as competitors to the Washington courts. These jurisdictions each have clearly outlined payment policies for contract court interpreters and two (the federal courts and the California Judicial Council) pay interpreters in half-day and full-day allotments, which was a payment preference shared by interpreters during the focus groups.

As may be expected, non-unified and decentralized court systems similar to Washington state note that local courts and individual contract court interpreters may determine local pay rates. However, some of these states, such as Florida or Georgia, include set rates or estimated pay

ranges for interpreters and courts. (Appendix A includes a chart with compensation rates and travel payment policies for federal and state court systems included in this review.)

Interpreter Rates Outside of Washington Courts

In addition to reviewing other state contract court interpreter compensation policies, WAI also conducted a landscape review of potential jobs and pay rates for contract court interpreter or staff interpreter work outside of the Washington courts. The review included publicly available information for contract court interpreter work in other surrounding states where Washington contract court interpreters may work, as well as other interpreting work in Washington and surrounding states that interpreters may choose to fill their contract portfolio, such as legal work outside of courts and medical interpretation assignments.

Publicly available information on contract court interpreter rates indicated that legal interpreting assignments have higher advertised rates than other interpreting positions. Examples included SOSI – an agency hiring and serving immigration courts which offers \$39-\$53 per hour for a range of in-person and remote work.¹³ Other examples included advertised staff court interpreter positions with the Oregon Judiciary, which included salary ranges of \$6,140- \$9,525 per month. Public information on other non-court legal interpreting work, such as interpreting for legal depositions, included one advertisement at an hourly rate of \$90 per hour.¹⁴

Pay scales for medical interpreters in Washington and Oregon appear significantly lower than the average rate for court interpreters in the state. The rates hover between \$20-\$40 per hour. However, when looking for contract interpreter work online, there were far more contract interpreter advertisements for medical interpreter positions listed than other types of interpretation. Postings for medical interpretation work greatly outnumbered court interpretation postings and, in some cases, the medical interpretation work did not list certification or credentialing requirements.

While court interpretation may pay more by hour, interpreters early in their career may be drawn to the availability of medical interpreting jobs and lower threshold for entry if no credential is required. Additionally, interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion may be drawn to medical interpreting assignments to create a fuller work portfolio, rather than one court assignment that may pay better at an hourly rate but does not fill a contractor's workday.

¹³ For more information on SOSI, see <https://www.sosi.com/about-us/>.

¹⁴ Public information for legal interpretation for depositions was limited but was mentioned in the court interpreter focus groups as a desirable contract assignment due to higher pay.

Review of Other Linguist Work/Industry Trends

A review of other linguist work and language industry trends highlights a projected need for linguists and interpreters. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects a 4% employment growth for interpreters and translators between 2022 and 2032.¹⁵ While the overall pay projected for interpreters and translators remains lower at \$27.54 per hour on average, the growth in the overall industry hints at more work opportunities for those entering the interpreting profession, which may mean more competition for the courts. Additionally, research on other jobs requiring bilingual skills in Washington state resulted in a range of opportunities, including bilingual customer service positions, bilingual recruiter positions, and cultural navigators.

These results indicate that individuals with bilingual skills are in demand across markets, and while individuals may continue to choose interpretation as a career path, the demand for bilingualism in other job markets may create more competition for the interpretation industry.

¹⁵ For more information, see: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/interpreters-and-translators.htm>

Key Insights of This Section

Scope of Research: Reviewed federal and state contract court interpreter payment policies in 18 states.

Hourly Rates: Credentialed interpreters are paid \$30-\$100 per hour; non-credentialed interpreters earn \$20-\$90 per hour.

Minimum Hourly Requirements: Federal courts and some states have policies for two-hour to four-hour minimum payments.

Non-unified Systems: States with decentralized systems like Washington state often have local rates set by courts and interpreters, but some provide guidance or estimated ranges.

Job Market Overview: Higher pay for court interpretation than medical interpretation; however, more job postings for medical interpretation exist, potentially drawing interpreters due to availability.

Variation in Policies: Some states have standardized policies and pay rates; others leave it to local courts.

Travel Reimbursement: Policies often follow federal or state-approved mileage rates.

Interpreter Rates Outside of Washington Courts: Legal interpreting assignments often pay higher rates compared to other interpreting positions.

Key Comparisons: Federal courts, Oregon Judicial Department, and California Administrative Office of the Courts are noted competitors with clearly outlined payment policies.

Industry Trends: Projected 4% employment growth for interpreters and translators by 2032; other bilingual job opportunities could create competition for the interpretation industry.

WA AOC Contract Court Interpreters

The findings and insights presented below were triangulated from the following data sources.

- **AOC LAIRP Dataset:** 54,111 contract court interpreter assignments representing 118 languages and staff interpreters representing 3 languages in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY2022) and Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023).
- **AOC Court Interpreter Survey:** 202 individuals completed the court interpreter survey.
- **AOC Court Interpreter Focus Groups:** 12 individuals participated in three focus groups, categorizing court interpreters into Spanish, High Demand, and Lesser Diffusion groups. One individual was interviewed individually.

The data was grouped into the following categories based on the LAIRP Dataset to produce the following Language groups:

- 123 languages were categorized into the following Language groups:
 - **Spanish:** 56% of assignments
 - **High Demand:** 35% of assignments with 400 or more assignments (excluding Spanish) in the LAIRP dataset in FY2022 and FY2023. These 17 languages include- Russian, Chuukese, Vietnamese, Chinese-Mandarin, American Sign Language, Arabic, Punjabi, Korean, Marshallese*, Mam, Somali, Samoan, Chinese-Cantonese, Amharic, Farsi, Tagalog (Filipino)*, and Swahili
 - **Lesser Diffusion:** the remaining 9% of assignments account for 105 languages with less than 400 assignments in the LAIRP dataset in FY2022 and FY2023.

**Assigned to Lesser Diffusion Focus Group based on its U.S.-wide determination.*

Context

The majority of Washington's counties are represented in the LAIRP

What counties are included in the Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP)?

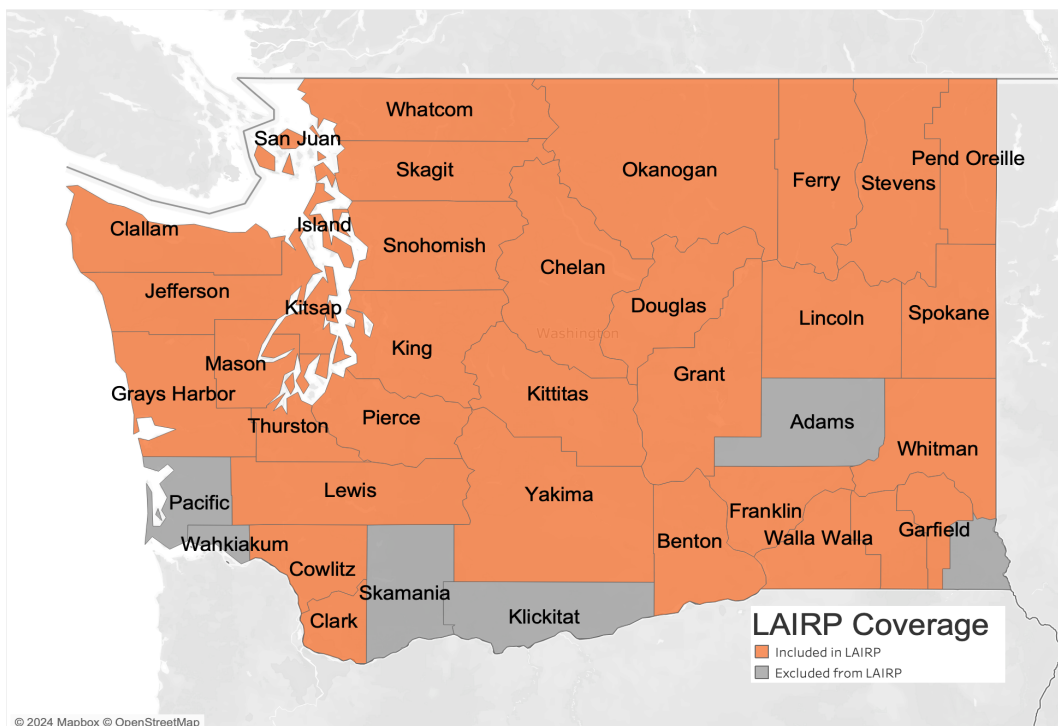


Figure 2: Counties Included in the Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP) - Source: <https://countyofficials.org/192/County-Map>

As demonstrated in Figure 2, the LAIRP analysis includes 33 of Washington's 39 counties. Specifically, 32 (82%) of Washington's counties work with contract court interpreters across 94 courts (78 courts in FY2022 and 92 courts in FY2023), while 8 (21%) of Washington's counties work with staff interpreters across 10 courts in both FY2022 and FY2023). Note that there is an overlap where courts use both contract court interpreters and staff interpreters.

The court interpreter survey included interpreters from 23 counties and other states. Consequently, 59% of Washington's counties are represented, along with nine other states (Oregon, Illinois, Idaho, Minnesota, California, Texas, New Jersey, Missouri, and Nevada).

The counties most represented in the LAIRP data, accounting for 74% of all assignments, are King, Snohomish, Clark, Pierce, and Yakima. Additionally, 68% of contract court interpreter survey respondents also reside in these counties.

The counties not represented in the FY2022 and FY2023 LAIRP data but included in the court interpreter and/or court survey are Adams, Asotin, Klickitat, Pacific, Skamania, and Wahkiakum. Note that some of these counties are now participating in the FY2024 LAIRP.

The majority of interpreter assignments occurred in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (CLJs) specifically, Criminal Traffic and Non-Traffic Court Cases are the most common assignments for language interpretation

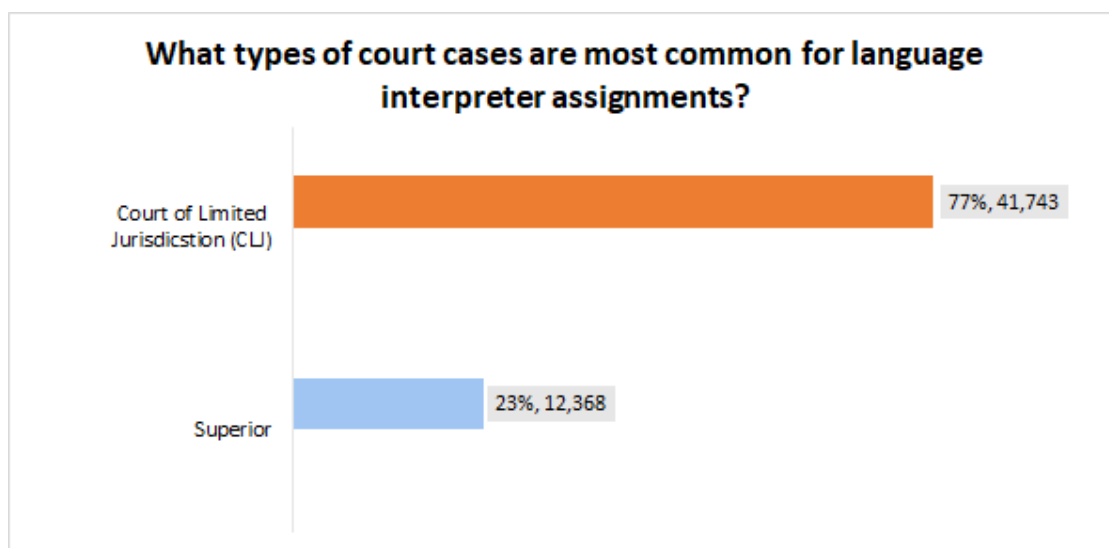


Figure 3: The Majority of Cases Are in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (CLJs) Compared to Superior Courts

As demonstrated in Figure 3, among all 54,111 cases, 77% were in CLJs and 23% in Superior Courts.

What are the top 10 most reported court cases for language interpreter assignments?

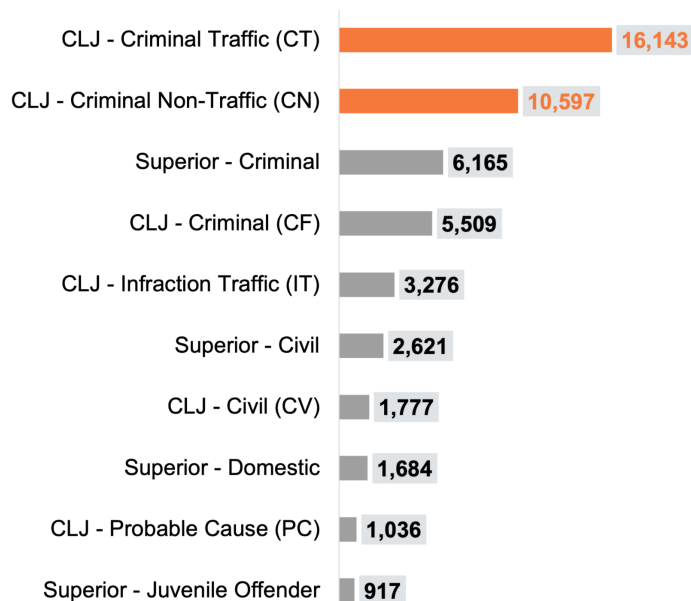


Figure 4: Distribution of Interpreter Events Among the Top 10 Reported Case Types, Highlighting the Prevalence of Criminal Traffic and Non-Traffic Cases in Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (CLJs)

As demonstrated in Figure 4, the top 10 reported court cases account for 92% of all cases, and Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (CLJs) - criminal traffic and non-traffic cases account for 54% of that. Note that these may be underestimated, since some of these case types were reported more than once in grouped assignments. It is important to note that in some instances multiple cases were reported in one assignment.

Interpreting agency fees impact reported hourly rates in the LAIRP data

In the context of the LAIRP, hourly rates are defined as what courts pay to provide interpreting services; this may include interpreting agency fees within the overall rate. According to the AOC, non-credentialed interpreters are more likely to be hired via interpreter agencies in comparison to credentialed interpreters.

Compensation

LAIRP data demonstrates how average hourly rates vary by language credentialing and interpreter credentialing status

Overall, when looking at the LAIRP data by the certification status while considering American Sign Language (ASL) independently, among credentialed languages, credentialed court interpreters received a higher average hourly rate than non-credentialed court interpreters. As we will see in future analyses, this is also the trend when looking at the LAIRP data over time, by language, and in the most recent Fiscal Year.

The overall average hourly rate for spoken languages among credentialed languages was **\$65.63** for credentialed interpreters and **\$64.01** for non-credentialed interpreters. The overall average hourly rate for spoken languages among non-credentialed languages was **\$75.77**, demonstrating that the court pays higher average hourly rates for non-credentialed languages. It is also important to note that 9% of interpreter assignments were for non-credentialed spoken languages.

Table 1: Unadjusted Average Hourly Rates with number and percentage of interpreting assignments from LAIRP by Language and Interpreter Credentialing Status

Language Group	FY2022	FY2023	Overall
Spoken Language Interpreters- Credentialed Languages: Credentialed Interpreter	\$64.64 (17,629, 73%)	\$66.37 (23,373, 78%)	\$65.63 (41,002, 76%)
Spoken Language Interpreters- Credentialed Languages: Non- Credentialed Interpreter	\$60.21 (3,959, 16%)	\$68.66 (3,237, 11%)	\$64.01 (7,196, 13%)
Spoken Language Interpreters- Non-Credentialed Languages	\$72.88 (2,011, 8%)	\$77.89 (2,724, 9%)	\$75.77 (4,735, 9%)
American Sign Language (ASL) Credentialed Interpreter	\$72.51 (414, 2%)	\$81.71 (537, 2%)	\$77.71 (951, 2%)

Language Group	FY2022	FY2023	Overall
American Sign Language (ASL) Non-Credentialed Interpreter	\$88.52 (99, 0.4%)	\$111.23 (128, 0.4%)	\$101.32 (227, 0.4%)

Table 2: Inflation-adjusted Average Hourly Rates from LAIRP by Language and Interpreter Credentialing Status

Language Group	FY2022	FY2023	Overall
Spoken Language Interpreters- Credentialed Languages: Credentialed Interpreter	\$70.22	\$67.88	\$68.89
Spoken Language Interpreters- Credentialed Languages: Non- Credentialed Interpreter	\$66.07	\$70.28	\$67.96
Spoken Language Interpreters- Non-Credentialed Languages	\$79.23	\$79.63	\$79.42
American Sign Language (ASL) Credentialed Interpreter	\$78.95	\$83.47	\$81.50
American Sign Language (ASL) Non-Credentialed Interpreter	\$95.87	\$113.63	\$105.89

As demonstrated in Table 1, the average hourly rate for spoken languages among credentialed languages with a credentialed interpreter increased slightly from **\$64.64** in FY2022 to **\$66.37** in FY2023. However, when looking at inflation-adjusted averages, average hourly rates decreased slightly (**\$70.22** to **\$67.88**). Among credentialed languages with non-credentialed interpreters, the average hourly rate increased from **\$60.21** in FY 2022 to **\$68.66** in FY 2023. When looking at inflation-adjusted averages, average hourly rates also increased slightly (**\$66.07** to **\$70.28**) (Table 2). Of note, it's important to compare the reported (unadjusted) hourly rates with inflation-adjusted rates, so the true change in pay relative to the change in cost of living can be assessed over time.

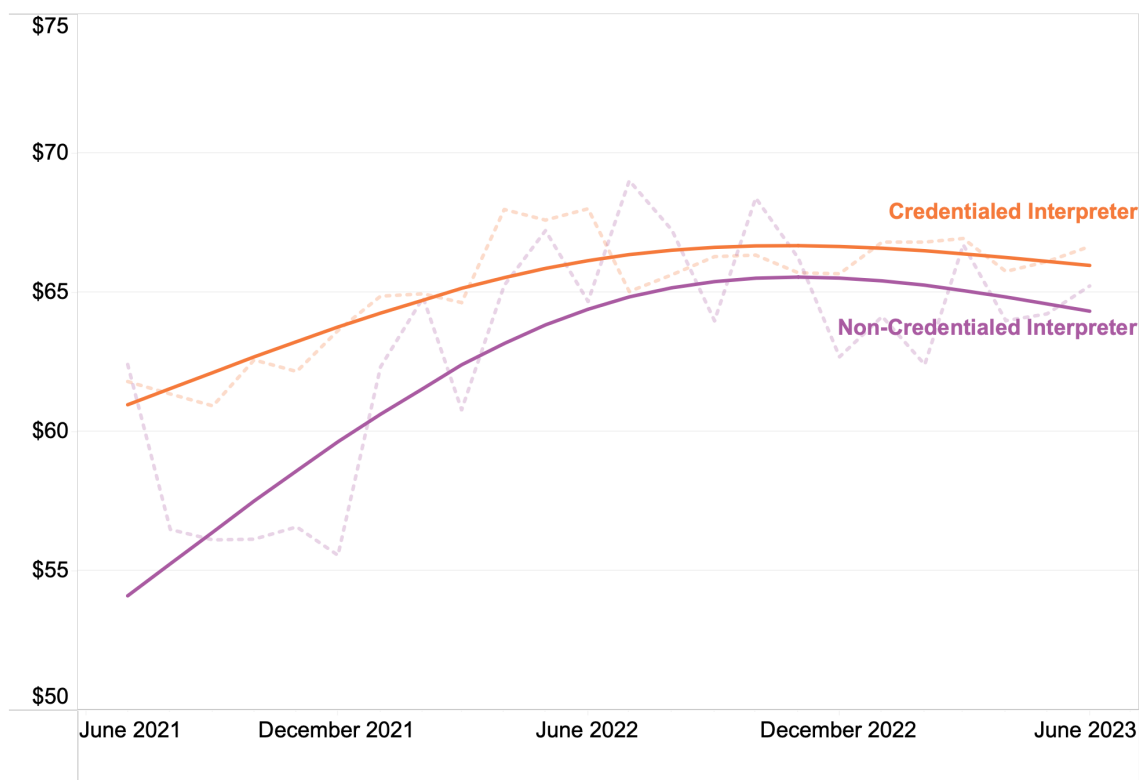
Table 1 also demonstrates how the average hourly rate for American Sign Language (ASL) varied by interpreter credentialing status. Overall, ASL-credentialed interpreters received less

than ASL-non-credentialed interpreters (\$77.71 vs. \$101.32). When looking at inflation-adjusted averages among ASL interpreters, average hourly rates increased from FY2022 to FY2023, mostly notably for ASL-non-credentialed interpreters (\$95.87 to \$113.63) (Table 2).

Average hourly rate ranges also varied widely within high demand languages by interpreter credentialing status; the rate of increase of non-credentialed interpreters is higher than the rate of increase of credentialed interpreters

The top 10 languages (excluding Marshallese)¹⁶ where credentialing was available as of June 2023 are: Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese-Mandarin, Arabic, Punjabi, Korean, Somali, Samoan, and Chinese-Cantonese.

How does the average hourly rate vary over time for the top 10 languages where credentialing is currently available, by interpreter credentialing status?

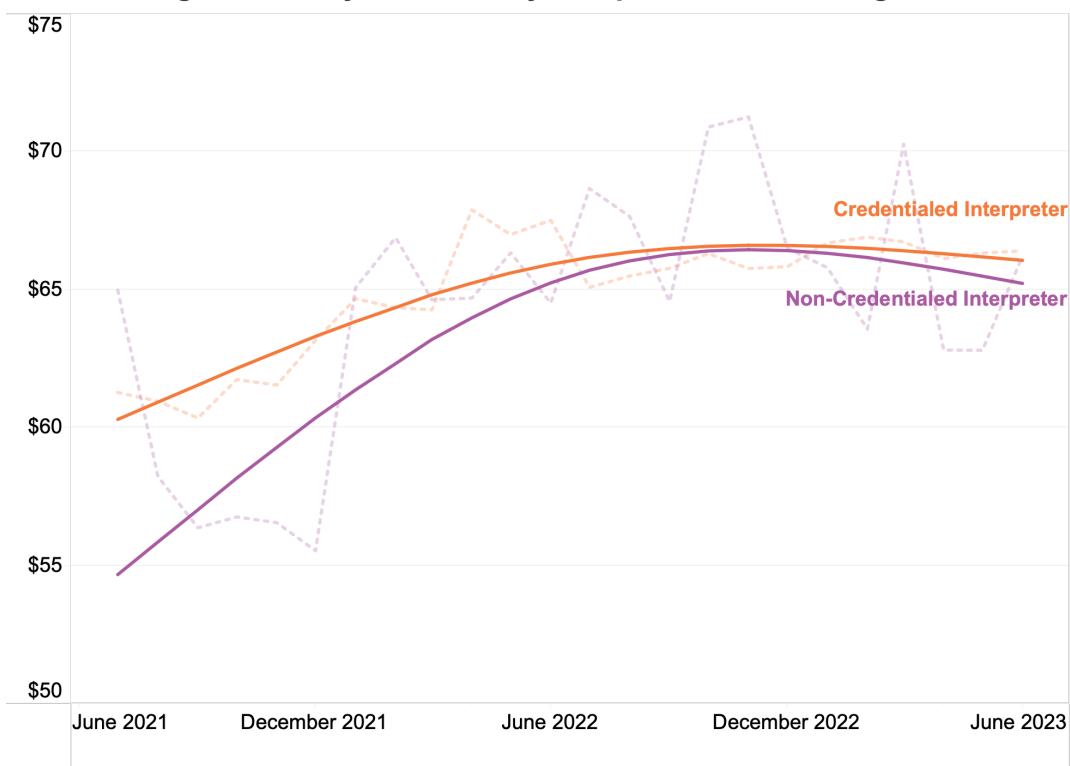


Note: Trends are expected average hourly rates derived from a generalized additive model of rates over time grouped by interpreters' credentialing status.

Figure 5: Average Hourly Rate Over Time for the top 10 languages where credentialing is currently available by Interpreter Credentialing Status (2022-2023)

¹⁶ Marshallese was categorized as a registered language and analyzed with other credentialed languages at the time of the analysis. However, because it is no longer a credentialed language, we excluded it from this finding.

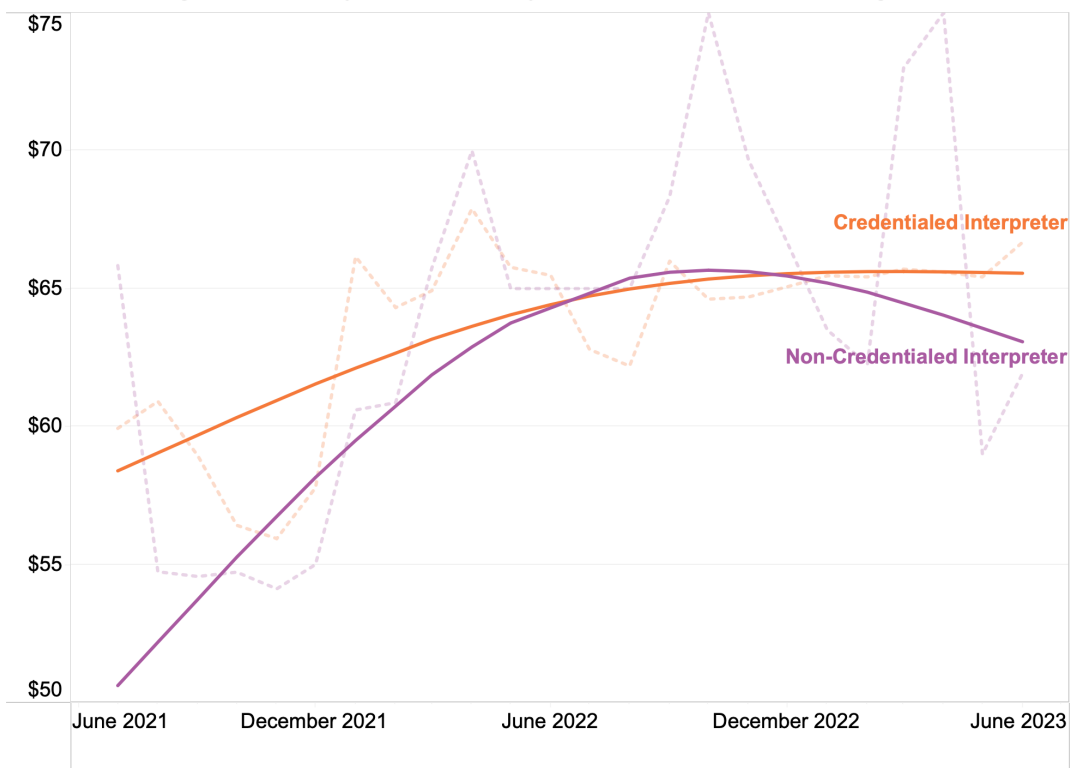
How does the average hourly rate vary over time for Spanish where credentialing is currently available, by interpreter credentialing status?



Note: Trends are expected average hourly rates derived from a generalized additive model of rates over time grouped by interpreters' credentialing status.

Figure 6: Average Hourly Rate Over Time for Spanish by Interpreter Credentialing Status (2022-2023)

How does the average hourly rate vary over time for Russian where credentialing is currently available, by interpreter credentialing status?



Note: Trends are expected average hourly rates derived from a generalized additive model of rates over time grouped by interpreters' credentialing status.

Figure 7: Average Hourly Rate Over Time for Russian by Interpreter Credentialing Status (2022-2023)

Figure 5 demonstrates that credentialed interpreters generally receive higher rates than non-credentialed interpreters. However, the narrowing pay gap between these two groups challenges the practice of higher pay rates for credentialed interpreters. As shown in Figures 6 and 7, there is significant variation in average hourly rates for non-credentialed contract court interpreters within Spanish and Russian. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that LAIRP data includes interpreting agencies fees within the overall rate.

This perceived discrepancy may explain the sentiments of dissatisfaction of some credentialed contract court interpreters. Contract court interpreters from the High Demand focus group expressed concerns with courts using non-credentialed contract court interpreters. They recommended a filtering system to ensure contract court interpreters were credentialed and prioritized for assignments over non-credentialed ones. Additionally, there was expressed concern that jobs are not equally distributed to credentialed contract court interpreters.

However, it is important to note that having credential status tends to provide a more consistent hourly rate over time, as opposed to the wide variations seen with non-credentialed interpreters. This consistency can be crucial for contract court interpreters who rely on stable and predictable pay rates for their work.

Significant differences of \$100 or more within each language were observed between the minimum and maximum rates for the following 37 languages (31% of languages interpreted). In order of largest to smallest difference by credentialing status:

- 63% of credentialed languages had a difference of \$100 or more: Chinese-Mandarin, Spanish, Armenian, Russian, Punjabi, Burmese, Khmer (Cambodian), Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, Certified Deaf Interpreter, Samoan, Tagalog (Filipino), Farsi, Thai, Portuguese, Marshallese, Swahili, Ukrainian, Laotian, Tigrinya, Japanese, Chinese-Cantonese, Urdu, Dari, Arabic, Amharic.
- 13% of non-credentialed languages had a difference of \$100 or more: Mixteco, Mien, Kanjobal, Mongolian, Rohingya, Triqui, Indonesian, Pashto, and Mam.

Average hourly rate ranges also varied widely within languages of lesser diffusion

Twenty-six (26) languages didn't have any difference in hourly rate (but 12 of these only had one reported hourly rate): Malay, Tzotzil, Sylheti, Nahuatl, Zapoteco (Bajo), Zapoteco-Ejutla De Crespo, Luganda, Uzbek, Shona, Kissi, Yapese, Chichewa, Karen-Zayein, Hiligaynon-Ilonggo, Zomi, Palauan, Croatian, Soninke, Moldavian, Persian Farsi, Norwegian, Kunama, Greek, Kurdish, Serbian, Chinese-Shanghainese. As they are languages of lesser diffusion, there are fewer interpreting assignments, which may explain these findings.

The highest average hourly rate was \$225 for Malay, which was interpreted once.

The lowest average hourly rate for Kanjobal (or Q'anjob'al) was \$57.98, which was interpreted 121 times. Both Malay and Kanjobal are non-credentialed languages. However, the rate increased from \$53.15 to \$63.07 from FY2022 to FY2023, and when looking at inflation-adjusted averages, average hourly rates increased (\$57.72 in FY2022 to \$64.63 in FY2023).

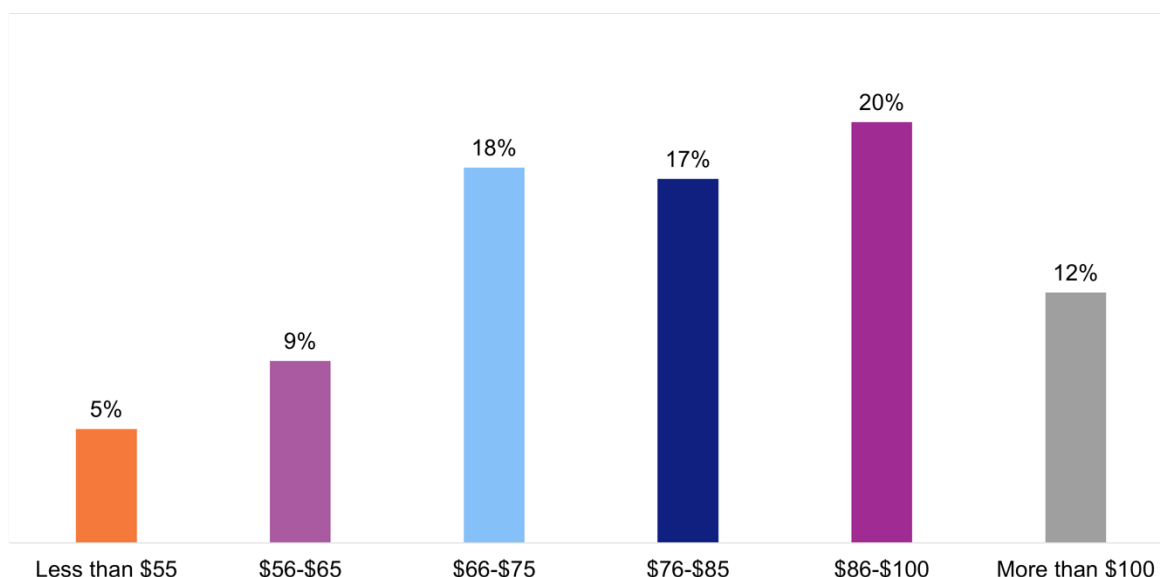
Disparities in hourly rates for court assignments within and outside of WA courts

The survey results reveal significant disparities in the hourly rates received by contract court interpreters for assignments. Within Washington courts, most interpreters for spoken languages

among credentialed languages with a credentialed interpreter (48%) reported receiving hourly rates between \$56 and \$65. Among credentialed languages with non-credentialed interpreters, most interpreters (62%) also reported receiving hourly rates between \$56 and \$65, although it's important to note that only 6 respondents were in this language group.

Most ASL-credentialed interpreters (67%) received similar hourly rates to ASL-non-credentialed interpreters (50%) ranging from \$66 to \$75. This is less than the average hourly rates reported in LAIRP, which overall, are \$77.71 for ASL-credentialed interpreters and \$101.32 for ASL-non-credentialed interpreters. This is most likely due to the fact that LAIRP data is based on reported court costs including any agency fees.

What is the average hourly rate you typically receive for court interpretation assignments outside of the Washington courts?



Note: This chart excludes categories with 0% values and the 19% of respondents who only worked in Washington courts. This may not capture the full range of the data.

Figure 8: Average Hourly Rate for Court Interpretation Outside of the WA Courts

In contrast, as shown in Figure 8, a broader range of rates is reported for court interpretation assignments outside of Washington courts (i.e. court assignments in other states).

Approximately 49% of contract court interpreters reported receiving rates between \$66 and \$100 per hour. Furthermore, 20% of respondents who take on court assignments outside the Washington courts reported receiving hourly rates in the \$86-\$100 range, whereas a negligible

percentage (4%) of contract court interpreters working within Washington courts reported receiving rates in this higher range, and the majority of those are interpreters for non-credentialed languages, or ASL.

Interestingly, 19% of survey respondents stated that they only work for Washington courts. This suggests that some interpreters may prefer or find value in the consistent volume of work or other benefits of working exclusively within the Washington court system.

Overall, the analysis highlights that interpreters working outside the Washington courts tend to command higher hourly rates than those working within the Washington courts.¹⁷ However, the consistent volume of work or other benefits of working within the Washington court system may appeal to a subset of interpreters, despite the potential for higher hourly rates in assignments outside the Washington courts.

In-person assignments are increasing and have higher rates in the LAIRP data in comparison to remote assignments

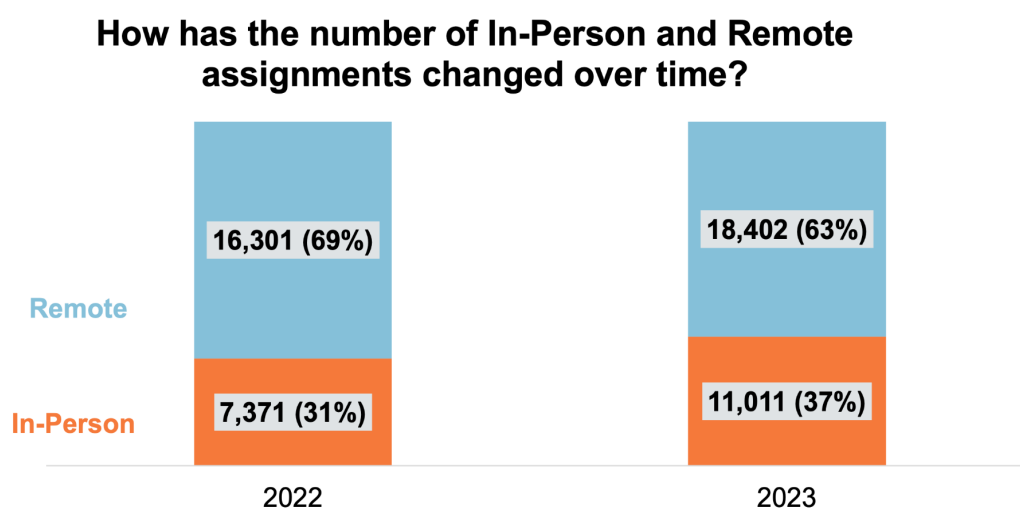


Figure 9: Distribution of In-Person vs. Remote assignments Over Time (2022-2023)

As demonstrated in Figure 9 there was a slight decrease in remote assignments from 69% in FY2022 to 63% in FY2023 but a slight increase in in-person assignments from 31% to 37%.

¹⁷ Note that interpreters contracting for assignments outside of Washington courts, such as in other states, may negotiate higher rates due to the market demand for a particular language and the scarcity of local interpreters in a particular language in that state. Additionally, rates may be higher if interpreters are contracted for half-day or full-day payment blocks, a practice utilized by other states and the federal court system.

How has the average hourly rate for In-Person and Remote assignments changed over time?

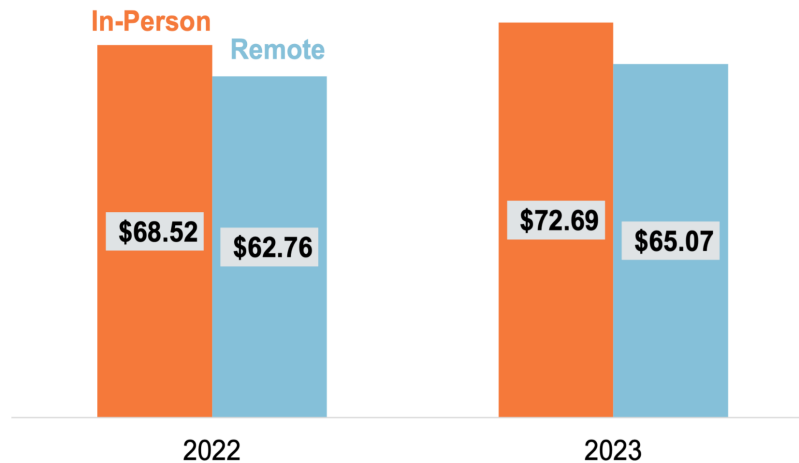


Figure 10: Comparison of Average Hourly Rates for In-Person vs. Remote assignments Over Time (2022-2023)

The average hourly rate is higher for in-person assignments (\$71.02) vs. remote-phone/video assignments (\$63.98). As shown in Figure 10, this trend was also found when looking at each fiscal year individually.

The survey data demonstrates that 77% of contract court interpreters reported no difference in hourly rates for remote interpretation, and consistent with the LAIRP data, 14% reported that the hourly rate for remote interpretation is lower than in-person interpretation. These discrepancies in reported rates may be explained by variations depending on the specific language being interpreted or the geographic location of the assignments.

Preferences for in-person vs. remote work vary by group; travel costs are a factor

How do you prefer providing interpretation? Mark all that apply.

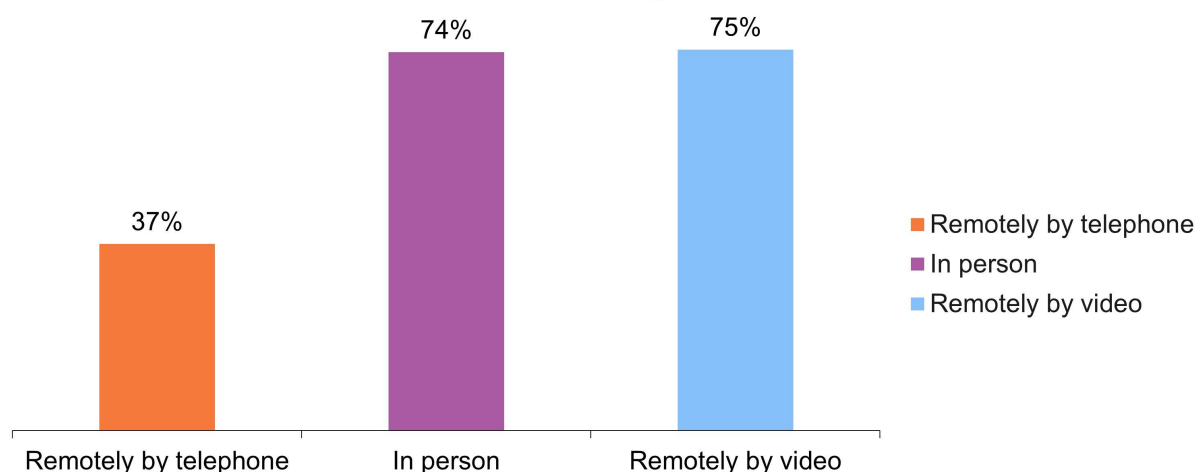


Figure 11: Percentage of Contract Court Interpreters' Preferences by Interpretation Types (Mark All That Apply)

The survey data (Figure 11) demonstrates that court interpreters have high preferences for in-person and remote video assignments (74% and 75%, respectively), but low for remote telephone assignments (37%).

Specifically, Spanish interpreters prefer in-person assignments (67%) slightly more than remote video assignments (59%). Similarly, in the court administrator focus group, staff mentioned that while some judges are open to video or telephonic interpretation services, others prefer in-person interpretation. High demand interpreters prefer remote video assignments (80%) more than in-person assignments (68%). There is no significant difference in preferences between in-person (74%) and remote video assignments (71%) for the lesser diffusion language group.

These findings varied somewhat from the contract court interpreter focus group discussions. One focus group participant shared:

“

Also zoom is preferable because you pay, you get paid the same amount, whether you're in person or whether you're in zoom.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

In the focus groups, high demand and lesser diffusion focus groups noted a preference for remote work, particularly if mileage and other travel costs were not provided for in-person assignments.

36% of in-person contract court interpreter assignments reported mileage

The average assignment length was 2.31 hours, and among those that reported mileage, the average travel mileage was 34.31 miles. Note that mileage is not mandatory for reporting in the LAIRP as not all assignments provide travel related expenses.

Spanish is the most requested language; the average hourly rate for Spanish contract court interpreters is lower than the overall average; High Demand Languages had more than 400 assignments each, accounting for 35% of all assignments

Aside from Spanish, in order of most to least interpreted, other high-demand languages include Russian, Chuukese, Vietnamese, Chinese-Mandarin, American Sign Language, Arabic, Punjabi, Korean, Marshallese, Mam, Somali, Samoan, Chinese Cantonese, Amharic, Farsi, Tagalog (Filipino), and Swahili.

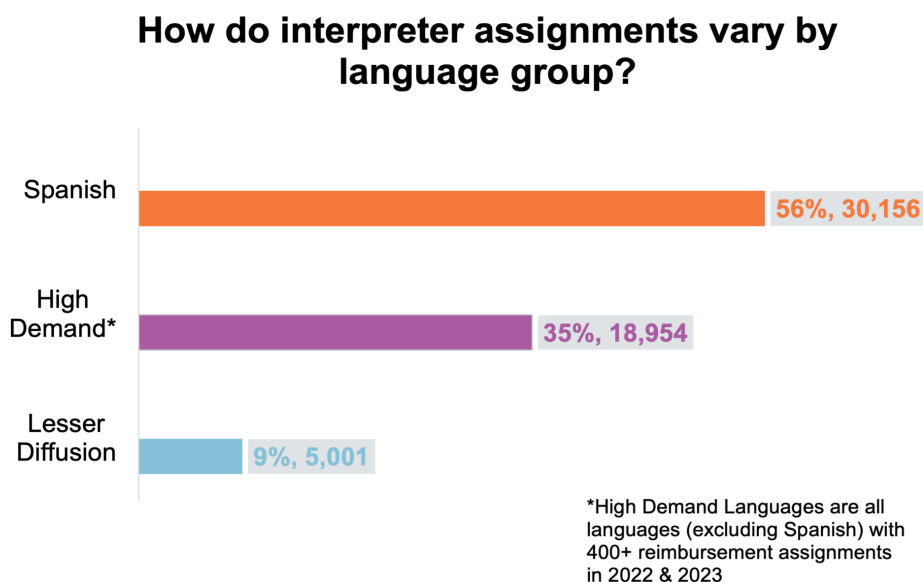


Figure 12: The Majority of Assignments that Received Reimbursement Were for Spanish Language Interpretation

As demonstrated in Figure 12, Spanish accounts for the majority (56%) of contract court interpreter assignments, while high demand languages account for 35%, and lesser diffusion languages account for 9%.

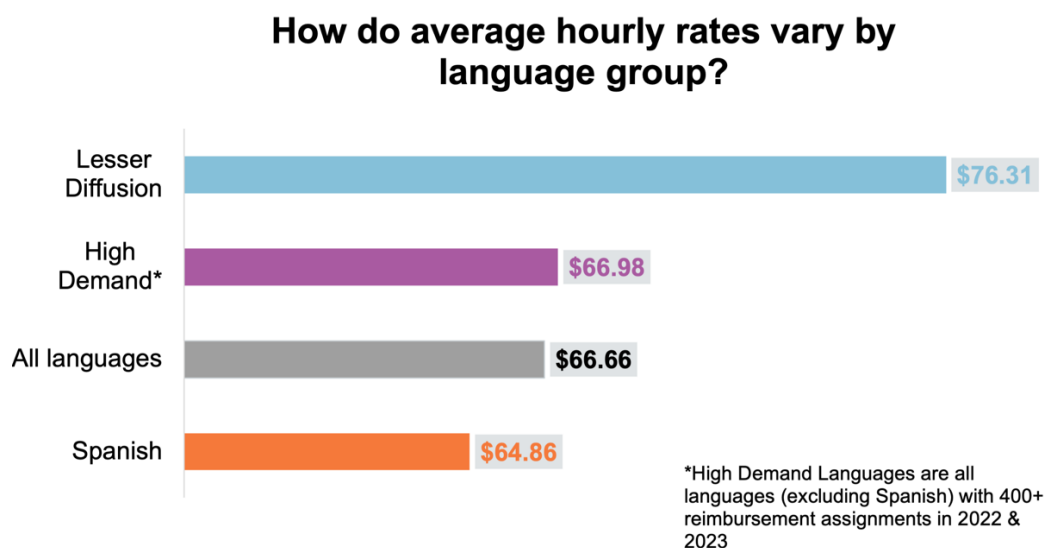


Figure 13: Average Hourly Rates for Spanish Assignments Compared to High Demand, Lesser Diffusion, and All Languages Combined

As demonstrated in Figure 13, the average hourly rate was \$66.66 across all 118 languages in FY2022 and FY2023, compared to \$64.86 for Spanish interpreters, \$66.98 for high demand language interpreters, and \$76.31 for lesser diffusion language interpreters.

On average, how often do you work in the Washington courts as a court interpreter, in terms of interpreter assignments?

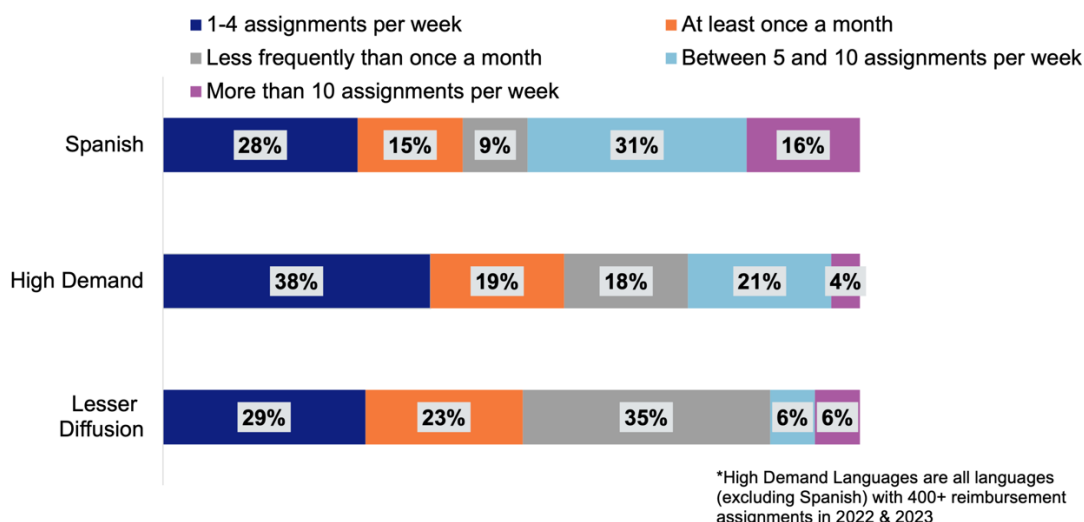


Figure 14: Frequency of Interpreter Assignment by Language Group

Survey data confirms that Spanish interpreters have assignments more frequently than the other groups. Figure 14 demonstrates how Spanish interpreters are more likely to have more than 5 assignments a week in comparison to high demand and lesser diffusion groups.

One focus group participant suggested that courts might revisit the idea of staff interpreters for languages other than Spanish.

“

The courts might revisit the idea of staff interpreters. Before the advent of remote interpreting, the only language that had sufficient demand to justify a staff interpreter was Spanish. However, with remote interpreting, one interpreter can now cover assignments in a lot of different courts with no travel time in between(...) It would take some administrative reorganization to do this, but it would probably save money in the long run for the courts. And I think staff positions with benefits are more attractive to a lot of interpreters.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

Overall, languages with more interpreting assignments have lower average hourly rates

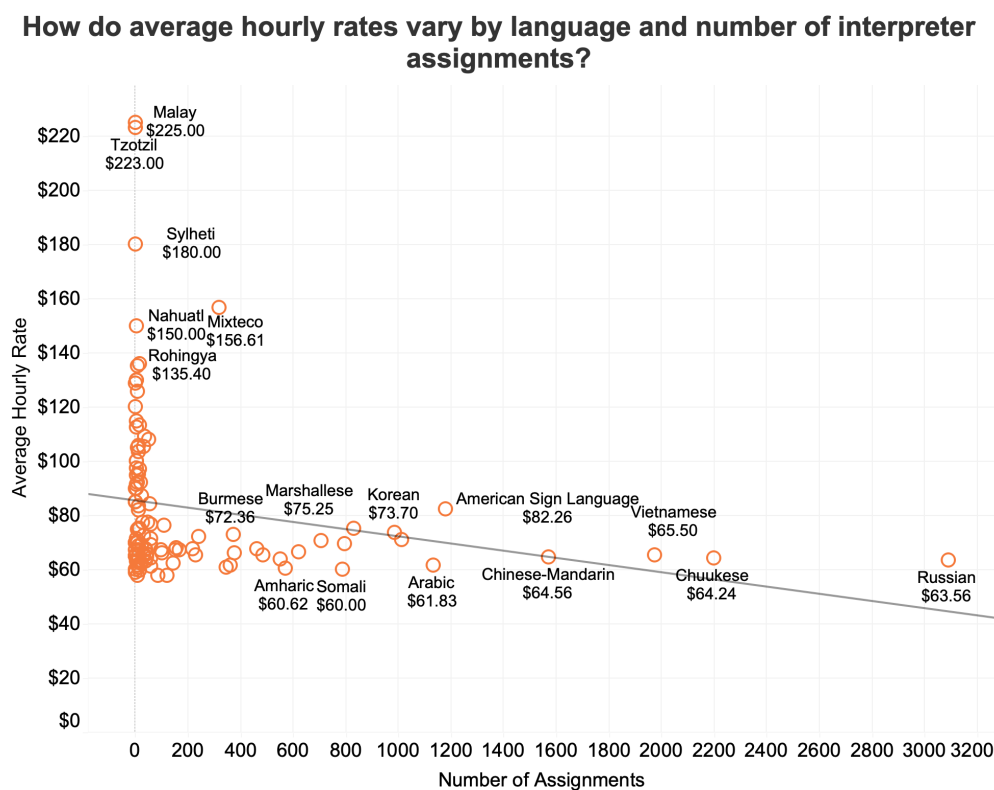


Figure 15: Average Hourly Rate vs. Number of Assignments for Various Languages

This relationship aligns with the findings demonstrated in Figure 15, showing that languages of lesser diffusion may have higher rates due to the desire to negotiate with fewer assignment options. Additionally, Spanish was excluded from the visual as it is an outlier with over 30,000 assignments, but with an average hourly rate of \$64.86, it aligns with this trend.

It is also important to note that all 12 languages with only one assignment are non-credentialed languages, and previous analyses demonstrated that non-credentialed languages received a higher average hourly rate than credentialed languages. For example, Malay, Tzotzil, & Sylheti had an average hourly rate of over \$180 with one assignment each, while Russian's average rate was \$64 among 3,090 assignments.

The Eastern region (which is more rural) has higher rates despite having fewer interpreter assignments in comparison to the Western region

What Washington counties are considered Western vs. Eastern?

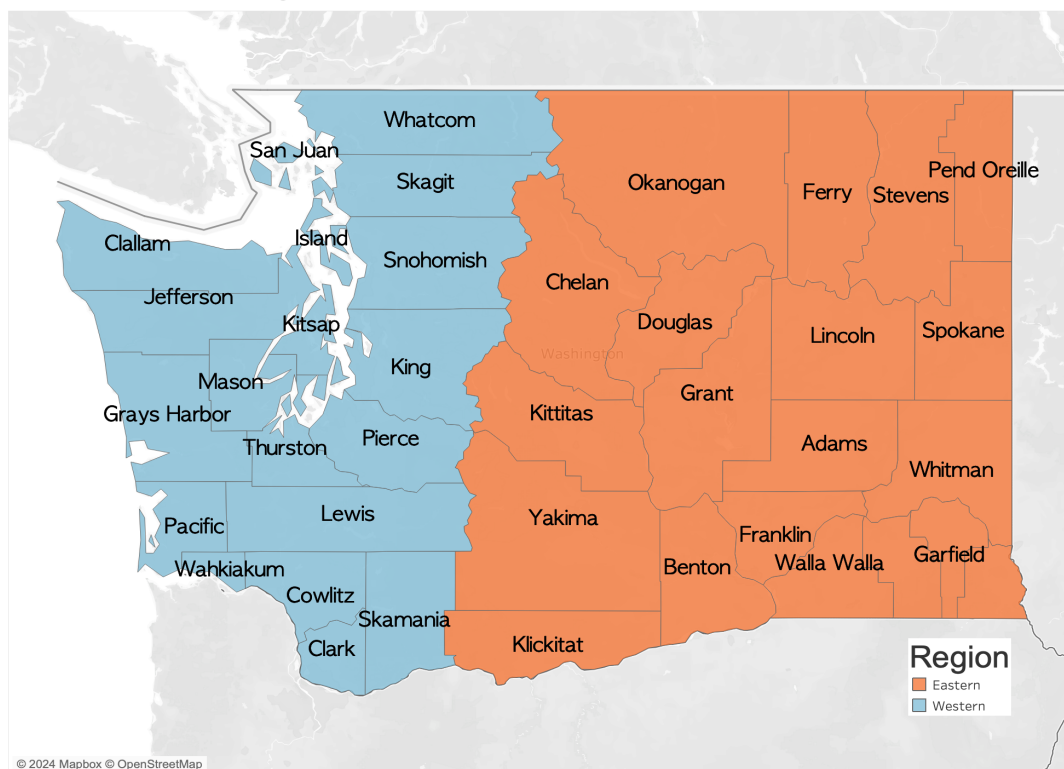


Figure 16: Counties Considered Western vs. Eastern in Washington State

The map in Figure 16 demonstrates the distribution of Western and Eastern Washington counties, for reference.

How does the average hourly rate vary by region?

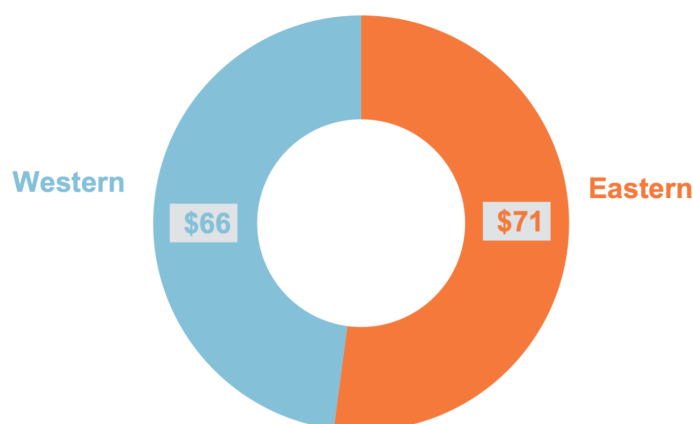


Figure 17: Average Hourly Rate Compared by Western vs. Eastern in Washington State

As demonstrated in Figure 17, the Eastern region, which had 32 courts and 50 languages interpreted, had an average hourly rate of \$71.46. The Western region, which had 62 courts and 115 languages interpreted, had an average hourly rate of \$65.69.

How does the number of assignments vary between regions by Spanish, High Demand, and Lesser Diffusion language groups?

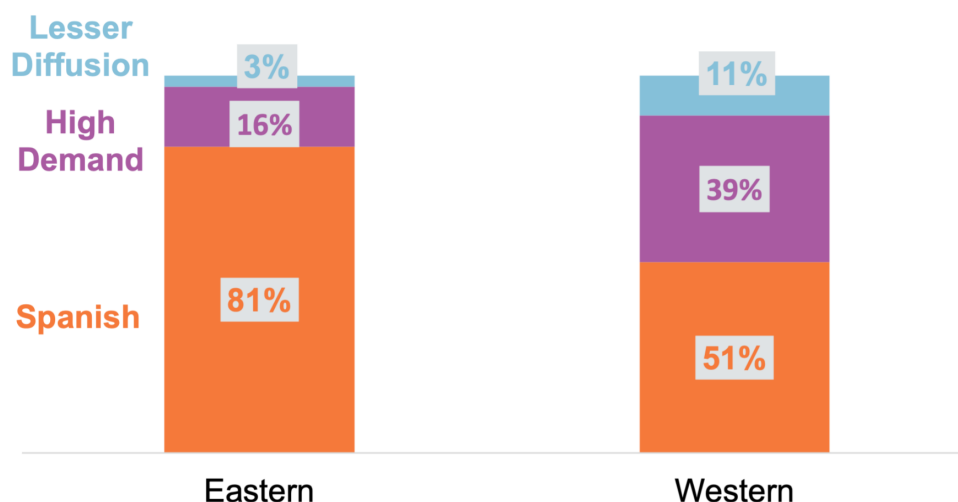


Figure 18: Variation in the Number of Assignments by Region for Spanish, High Demand, and Lesser Diffusion Language Groups

As demonstrated in Figure 18, 3% of interpreter assignments in the Eastern region were for languages of lesser diffusion compared to 11% in the Western WA region. This may be explained by the fact that Marshallese, which accounts for one-third (33%) of high demand languages in the Eastern region and only 2% of high demand languages in the Western region, has the second highest average hourly rate among high demand languages. Additionally, American Sign Language accounts for 17% of high demand languages in the Eastern region and only 5% of high demand languages in the Western region and has the highest average hourly rate among high demand languages.

Negotiation is more common among experienced interpreters, which may explain why they are more satisfied with the hourly rates offered by courts

Nearly half (49%) of the contract court interpreters surveyed said they negotiate the hourly rates offered by courts, suggesting that negotiation is a common practice among them.

Is there a relationship between years of experience and the likelihood of interpreters negotiating hourly rates in Washington courts?

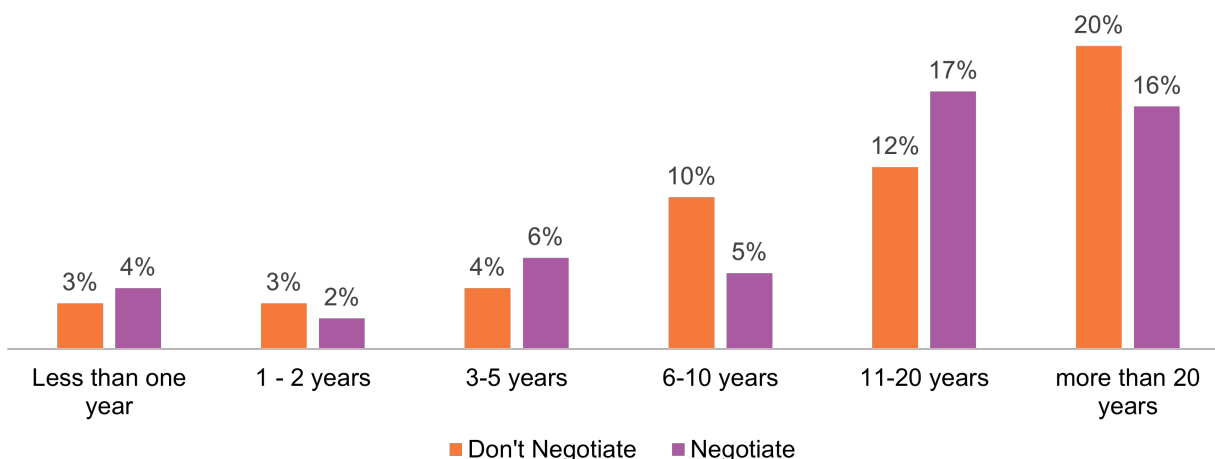


Figure 19: Likelihood of Interpreters Negotiating Hourly Rates by Years of Experience Working in WA Courts

As demonstrated in Figure 19, contract court interpreters with 11-20 years of experience are the most likely group to negotiate their rates (17%), followed by those with more than 20 years of experience (16%). Interpreters with less than one year of experience are the least likely to

negotiate (4%). This suggests that experience may play a role in an interpreter's willingness to negotiate, with more experienced interpreters feeling more confident or empowered to do so.

Additionally, there is a meaningful relationship between years of experience and satisfaction with the hourly rates offered by courts. Contract court interpreters with more years of experience tend to be more satisfied with the rates.

One focus group participant who successfully negotiated shared:

“

I told the [interpreter] agency a couple of years ago. I want a higher rate, and they got back to me in a few days and said, Fine!

- Spanish focus group participant

”

However, another focus group participant expressed a preference not to negotiate.

“

But I would like it if I didn't have to negotiate. If the courts just paid. You know, a higher rate for everybody.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

Negotiation is more common among court interpreters in the lesser diffusion group

Do you negotiate the hourly rate offered by the courts for interpreting assignments?

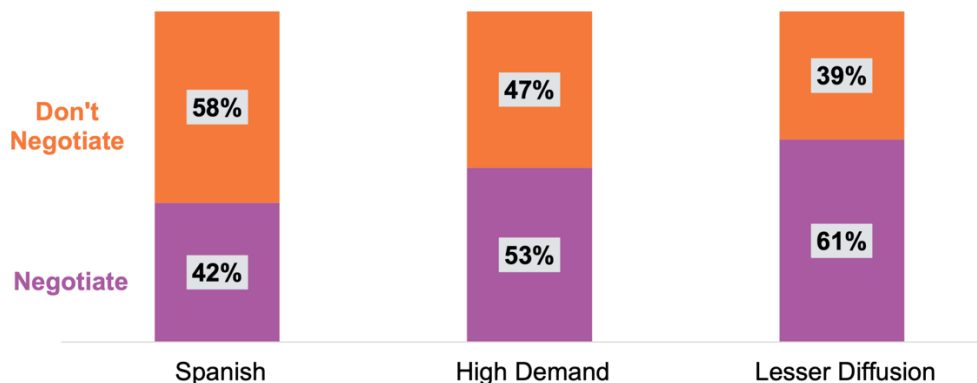


Figure 20: Percentage of Survey Respondents Reporting Negotiation of Hourly Rates by Courts Among Spanish, High Demand, and Lesser Diffusion Language Groups

The survey found that contract court interpreters in the lesser diffusion group were more likely to negotiate compared to those in the Spanish and high demand groups (Figure 20). This may be due to the scarcity of interpreters in the lesser diffusion group. Specifically, 61% of lesser diffusion group survey respondents negotiated rates, compared to 52% of the high demand group and 42% in the Spanish group.

“

The thing about negotiating is that you're also keeping in mind that maybe they're negotiating with you and three other people, maybe other, and then you're bidding against your colleagues who need this work just as much as you.

- Lesser Diffusion Focus Group

”

Interpreters were open to receiving standardized rates, but this varied by language group

The majority of survey respondents (61%) are open to receiving a set (standardized) rate for court interpreting, suggesting a general acceptance of the idea. Fewer respondents (25%) are

neutral indicating they may have a weak opinion or may need more information before forming a definitive stance. The remaining 14% are not open to a standardized rate.

The primary motivation for those open to a standardized rate is the potential to be scheduled for half-day or full-day assignments. Many open-ended responses highlighted that a competitive or higher pay rate than what they are currently receiving would be a key motivator.

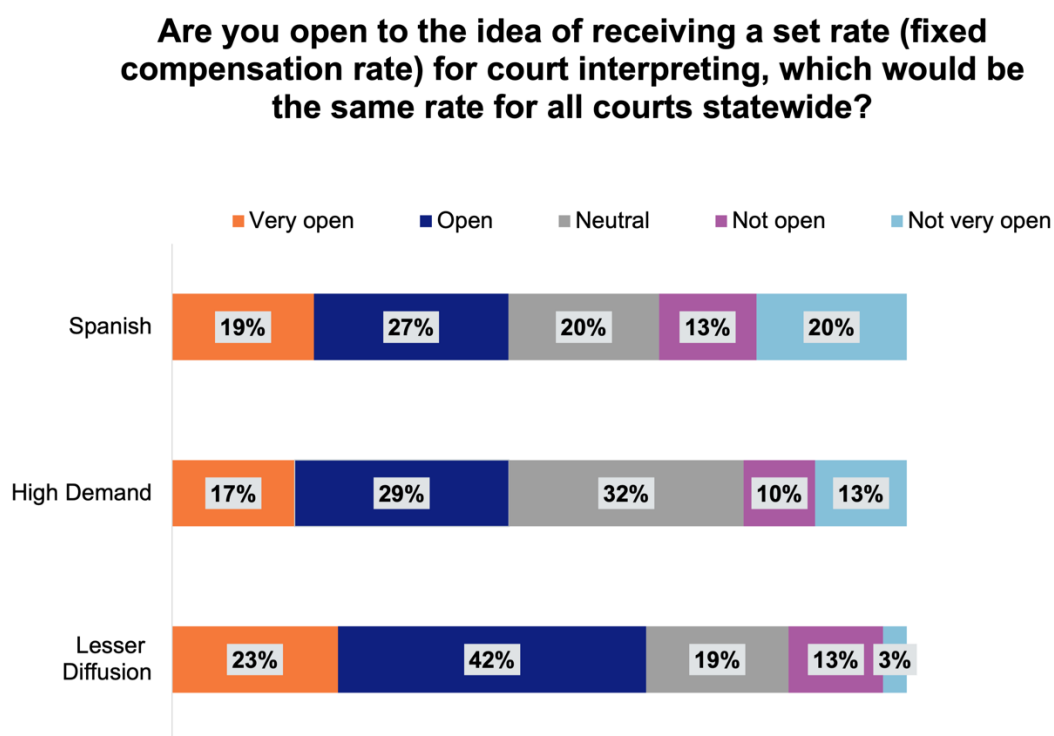


Figure 21: Openness of Spanish, High Demand, and Lesser Diffusion Language Interpreters to a Standardized Rate

Although Spanish contract court interpreters have a lower average hourly rate than the overall average hourly rate, the Spanish contract court interpreter focus group was less likely to be in favor of standardized rates (33% not very open or not open to a standardized rate) compared to interpreters in high demand and lesser demand groups, which aligns with the court interpreter survey findings (Figure 21).

One participant shared:

“

I think, say, that were to happen in Washington State, just a standardized interpreter schedule across Washington State. I probably would no longer work with State courts. Just because it was exactly what [anonymous] was saying that I think interpreters with different levels of experience and different credentials and different backgrounds are able to negotiate what they do negotiate, based on what they can offer an individual entity.

- Spanish Focus Group

”

Another focus group participant shared a justification of standardized rates based on a county or court level:

“

It does seem fair to me that, for example, King County Superior Court should probably pay all of their contract interpreters the same amount, instead of doing these side, I mean cause, then, then, like somebody may be negotiating and somebody not. And then you find out. Wait! You're getting paid that (amount), you know. Just doesn't seem right, that for the same trial.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

One court interpreter from the lesser diffusion group suggested that raises could be built into standardized rates, contingent upon experience, duration in the position, and other factors. Despite being more likely to negotiate compared to other groups (as noted in the survey), contract court interpreters in the lesser diffusion focus group prefer higher standardized rates but insist that the rates are fair.

Scheduling & Accepting Assignments

There's a strong preference for direct 1 on 1 communications with interpreter coordinators to share assignments

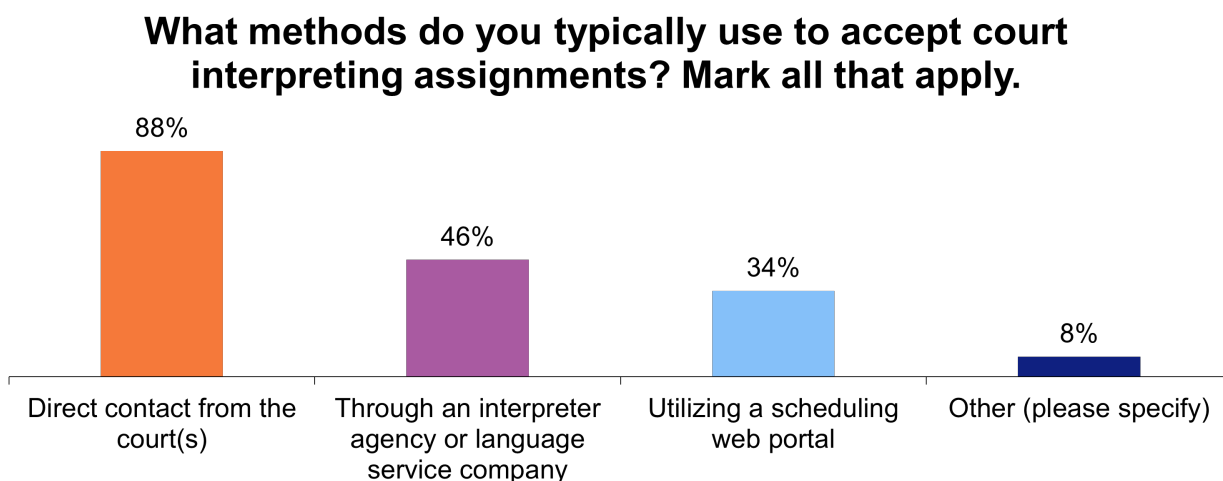


Figure 22: Distribution of Interpreters' Willingness to Accept Standardized Rates Across Language Groups (Percentage of Respondents Marking Each Option)

The surveys demonstrated that 88% of accepted assignments were through direct contact from the courts, 46% through an interpreter agency or language service company, and 34% utilizing a scheduling web portal (Figure 22).

Focus group discussions revealed that there was a strong preference for scheduling through relationships, specifically knowing the court and being contacted by the coordinator. There was dissatisfaction with mass emails about contract court interpreter assignments. For languages of lesser diffusion, the consensus was that it wasn't worth it to continuously monitor a portal for available assignments.

Additionally, it's important to note that sharing opportunities with only select contract court interpreters can be considered inequitable and introduce bias.

Accepting assignments was primarily based on three key factors: pay rate, frequency of work, and flexibility

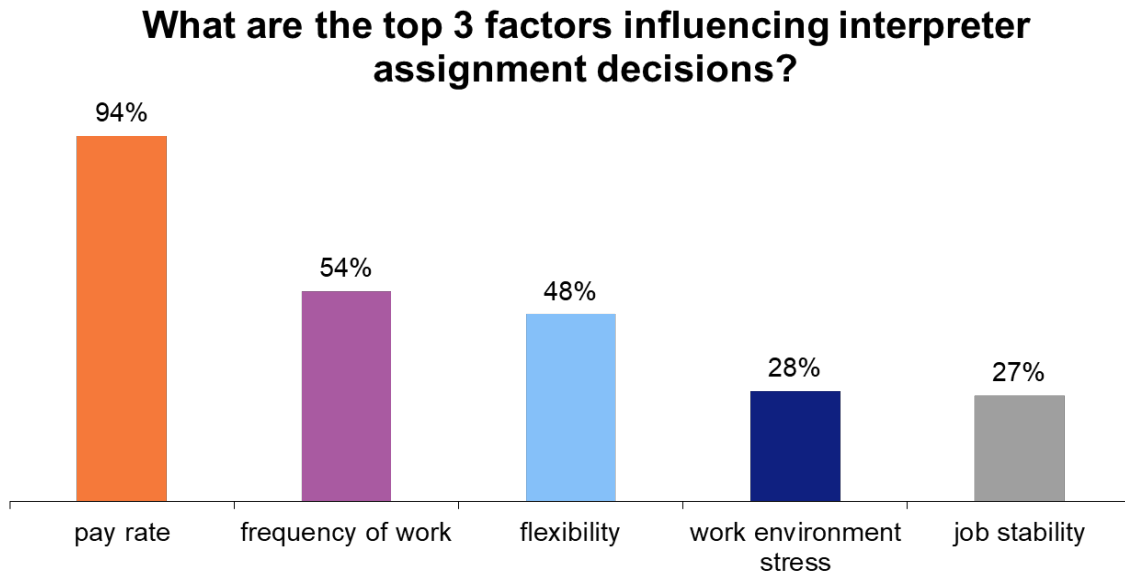


Figure 23: Top Factors Influencing Interpreters' Decisions to Accept an Assignment

The surveys revealed that the most frequently mentioned factor influencing the decision to accept an interpreting assignment is the pay rate, with 94% of respondents indicating it as one of their top three factors (Figure 23). This suggests that contract court interpreters prioritize assignments that offer competitive compensation. Following closely behind the pay rate, the frequency of work is another important consideration, with 54% of respondents selecting it as one of their top three factors. This indicates that court interpreters value consistent work opportunities. Additionally, 48% of respondents also mentioned flexibility, which suggests that contract court interpreters appreciate assignments that allow them to manage their schedules effectively.

There are additional factors that influence interpreters' acceptance of assignments

Other insights on the factors influencing interpreters' acceptance of assignments include job stability, work environment stress, and personal schedule and availability. Additionally, location, travel time, and distance were mentioned in the open-ended responses. One focus group participant shared:

“

Having spent 20 or so years sitting in traffic, driving all over from one port to another. I almost exclusively only accept remote jobs. I'm not interested in spending my time sitting in my car anymore.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

Streamlined invoicing is preferred

Establishing a manageable invoicing process was suggested to attract and retain contract court interpreters. Current invoicing processes are time-consuming for interpreters because they have to deal with different methods and different rates. One focus group participant shared:

“

And why are we even sending invoices in? I have several translation companies and one interpreting company that have just dispensed with invoices. They know how long they know that I was there, and they know how long. You know what the appointment was, and it was a 2 h minimum. So basically, they say, if the appointment went over 2 h, let me know. If not, just, we'll send you the money. There's no way that I really need to sit down and write up an invoice and send it in, so that may be a model that AOC could look at.

- High Demand Focus Group

”

Some assignments take an emotional toll on the interpreter

The Spanish focus group noted the emotional toll of certain assignments, which isn't always factored into the compensation. One participant shared:

“

I did too many sex offender cases, I won't do them anymore. Because I've just. I've got basically trauma after 32 years of hearing stuff. I won't. I won't do that stuff anymore. I cry. I can't do it.

- Spanish Focus Group

”

Recruitment & Retention

Competitive compensation is priority for recruitment and retention

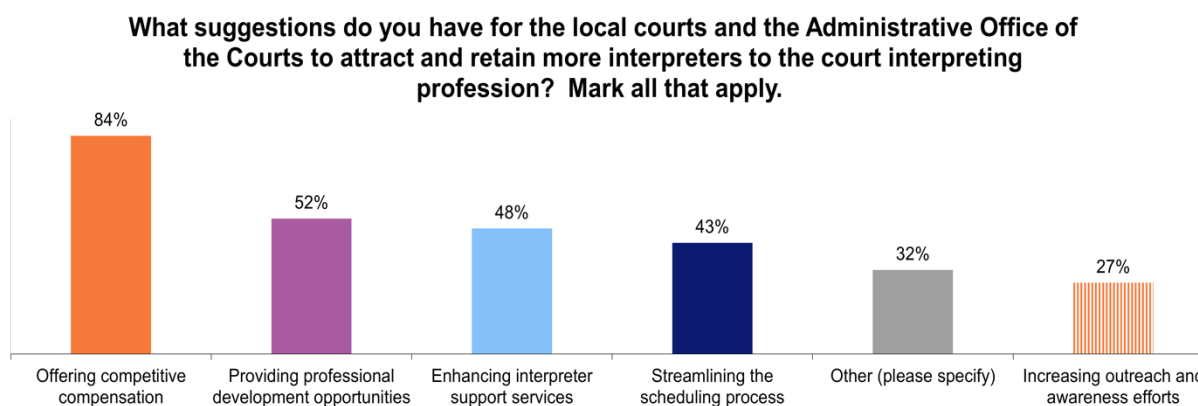


Figure 24: Percentage of Respondents (marking each option) by Suggestions for Local Courts and the AOC to Attract and Retain More Interpreters to The Court Interpreting Profession

The majority of survey respondents (84%) shared that competitive compensation is the priority suggestion to improve recruitment and retention (Figure 24).

Recruiting the younger generation through community-based initiatives is suggested by contract court interpreters

One focus group participant from the high demand group emphasized the need for financial incentives to attract younger individuals. Survey results indicated that the majority of contract court interpreters (41%) are in the retirement age range (61-75), followed by those aged 40-60. This underscores the need to increase efforts to recruit younger interpreters.

Survey respondents proposed offering training programs, mentoring initiatives, and educational outreach to schools and community organizations. Suggestions included conducting outreach to language classes in schools, providing incentives for experienced interpreters to mentor prospective interpreters, and encouraging courts to hire interpreters directly rather than through agencies.

One focus group participant recommended community-based and school outreach for recruiting the younger demographics:

“

I think that if the AOC or courts either one, whoever want, you know. But if they would do like classes. And well, I- I focus more in the small, smaller communities. So that'd probably be different perspective than folks in the cities, you know. But I feel like in our area if they would go to the various towns like Bellingham, Mount Vernon, Oak Harbor, Everett, and give like free Saturday. 3 class. You know, like advertise it. I'm not sure how you do advertising. But just say, anybody, you know, bilingual people interested in interpreting. If you want to hear more about the profession. Come on this day in place at like a community college or somewhere, and just learn about the profession, the testing what you might do to prepare for it. Educate people. There is a tremendous shortage for the younger generation.

- Spanish Focus Group

”

Survey responses indicate that 90% of courts do not conduct outreach or recruitment activities for new interpreters entering the field. To support recruitment recommendations made during the focus groups, both the AOC and the courts can participate in outreach activities. The AOC should continue with recruitment initiatives underway, including conducting outreach to potential contract court interpreters through job fairs, professional interpreter organizations, conferences, and educational institutions. Additionally, the AOC should share court interpreter outreach materials and information for courts to publicize and distribute at the local level.

Washington State Trial Courts

Court Administrators

The findings and insights presented below were triangulated from the following data sources.

- **AOC Court Administrator Survey:** 95 individuals completed the court administrator survey.
- **AOC Court Administrator Focus Group:** 4 individuals participated in 1 focus group and 1 individual was interviewed individually.

Context

The majority of Washington's counties are represented in the Court Administrators Survey

What counties are included in the Court Administrators Survey?

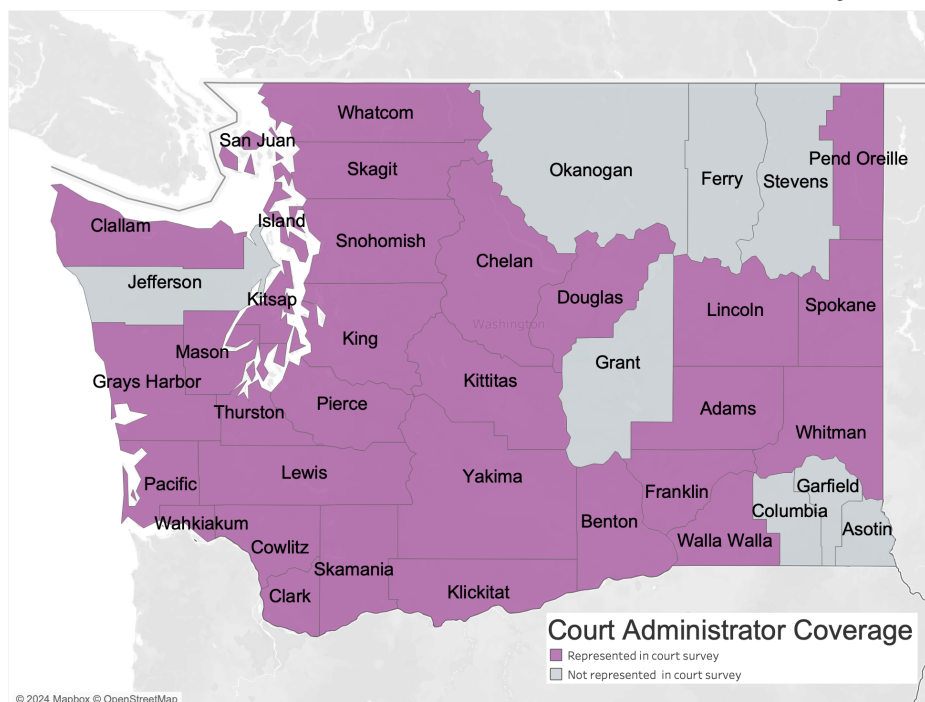


Figure 25: Counties Represented in the Court Administrators Survey

As demonstrated in Figure 25, the court survey included court administrators from 31 counties. Therefore, 79% of Washington’s counties are represented.

Additionally, most court administrators represent Municipal (51%) courts, followed by District (29%), Superior (27%), and Juvenile (18%) courts.

The demand for court interpreters is high

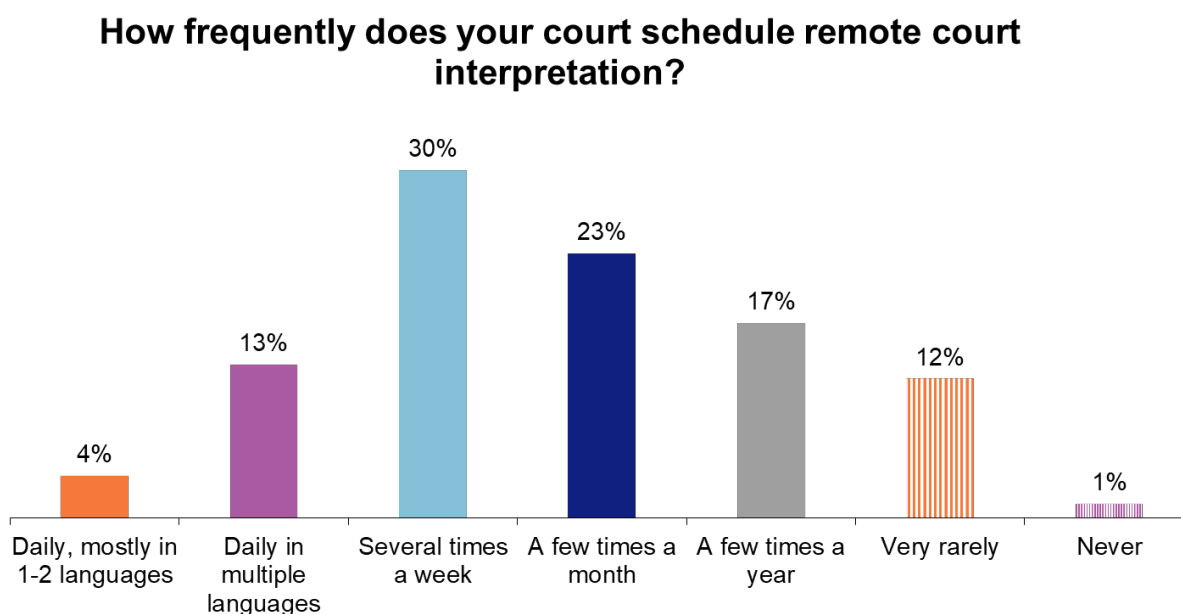


Figure 26: Percentage of Frequency of Courts Scheduling Remote Court Interpretation Assignments

As demonstrated in Figure 26, court administrators reported needing interpreters several times a week (30%), followed by a few times a month (23%), a few times a year (17%), daily in multiple languages (13%), very rarely (12%), and daily mostly in 1-2 languages (4%).

This data indicates a consistent and varied demand for remote court interpreters across different courts, with a notable percentage requiring interpretation services multiple times a week or even daily. The diverse frequency of scheduling highlights the importance of having a reliable pool of interpreters available to meet the varying needs of these courts.

Compensation

Court pay rates vary by language credentialing group

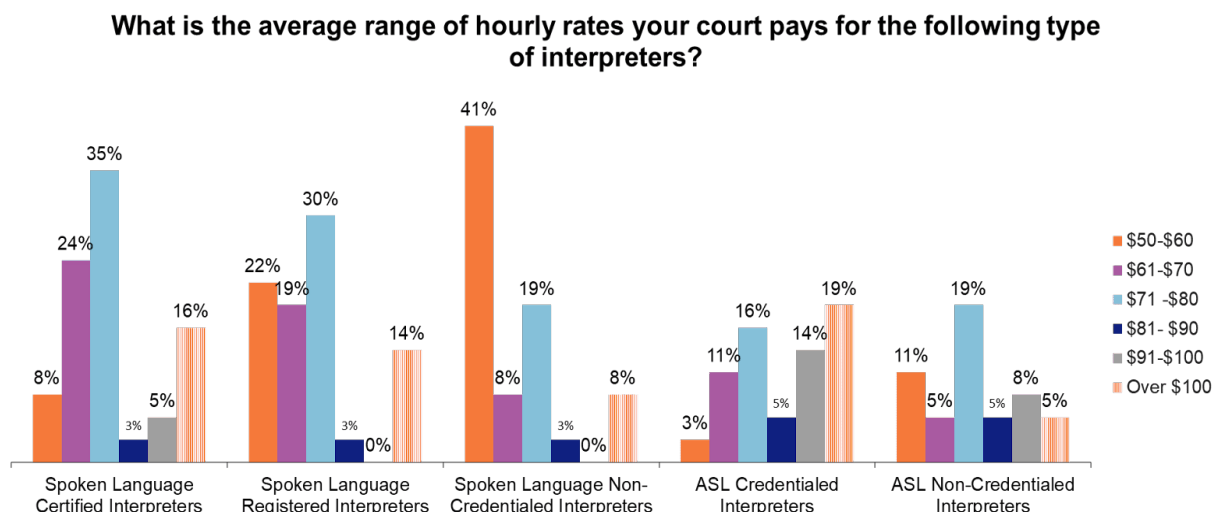


Figure 27: Average Range of Hourly Rates by Type of Interpreter (Spoken Language Certified, Spoken Language Registered, Spoken Language Non-Credentialed, ASL Credentialed, and ASL Non-Credentialed)

When excluding those that reported 'not sure', the court administrators reported that courts paid for spoken language credentialed interpreters (spoken language certified interpreters, spoken language registered interpreters) rates of \$71-\$80. Courts paid for ASL credentialed interpreters typically rates over \$100. The courts typically paid rates between \$50-\$60 for spoken language non-credentialed interpreters and between \$71-\$80 for ASL non-credentialed interpreters (Figure 27).

These rates were slightly higher than the hourly rates reported by court interpreters in the court interpreter survey, where the hourly rate ranges were mostly \$56- \$65 for spoken language credentialed or non-credentialed interpreters and \$66- \$75 for ASL credentialed or non-credentialed interpreters. This discrepancy may reflect the inclusion of agency fees, indicating that the amount the interpreter receives may be lower than what the court pays.

The majority of courts find implementing a standardized rate and payment policies for contract court interpreters helpful

Would it be helpful to your court if there was a standardized statewide hourly rate (or full/half day rate) and payment policies for court interpreters?

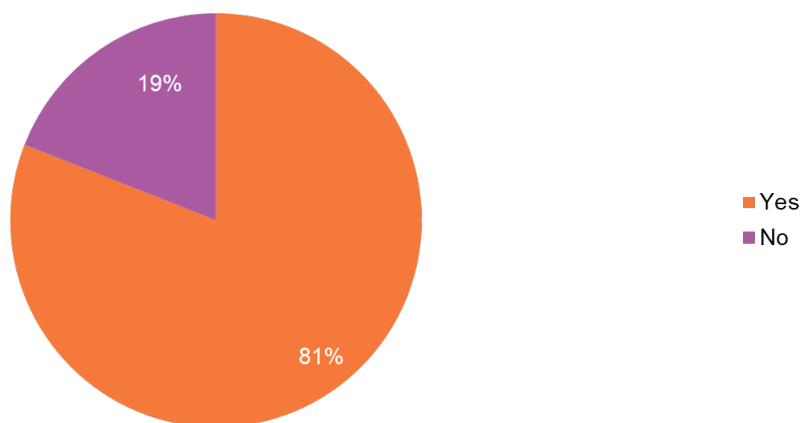


Figure 28: Proportion of Courts open to Having a Standardized Rate

As demonstrated in Figure 28, the overwhelming support (81%) from court administrators for a standardized rate and payment policies suggests a strong consensus on the benefits of such implementation. This majority indicates that court administrators recognize the potential advantages, such as consistency in payment, fairness in compensation, and possibly improved quality of interpreter services. Consequently, this positive reception implies that court administrators are likely to be open to adopting standardized rates for contract court interpreters, which could lead to more uniform and equitable practices across the court system.

Budgeting and funding practices are a priority for courts

During the focus group, some courts revealed challenges in contracting and retaining. They noted struggling to adequately compensate interpreters due to limited budgets, impacting their ability to contract and retain qualified interpreters. Additionally, courts compete with other industries that can offer higher pay, making it difficult to attract and retain contract court interpreters.

There were also concerns about resource allocation. For instance, during the focus group, court administrators noted that interpreters are sometimes underutilized, as they charge for a minimum duration regardless of the actual time spent on the assignment. This underutilization can lead to perceptions of overpayment, as interpreters may complete their work in less time

than the allotted duration. As a result, court staff may feel they are paying for services that are not fully utilized.

Despite these challenges, it is important to note that out of 95 court survey respondents, 80% participate in LAIRP seeking reimbursement for language access services. Of the courts that do not seek reimbursement, some of the most common reasons were a lack of awareness of the reimbursement process (53%), the cost of interpreters is not significant enough to warrant reimbursement (35%), or the reimbursement process is too complex or time-consuming (29%).

Scheduling & Accepting Assignments

Most courts rely on court administrators to schedule interpreters, using the Washington AOC roster as the primary method to find contract court interpreters

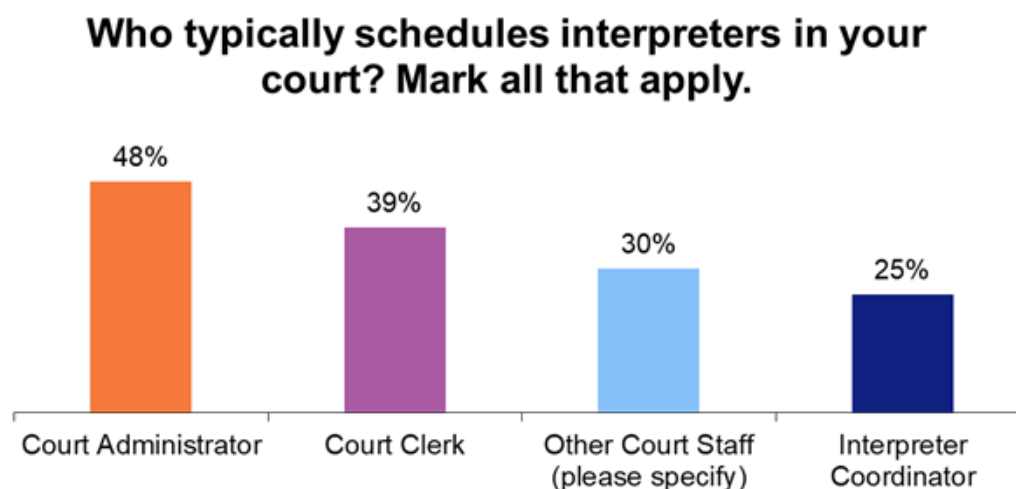


Figure 29: Percentage of Staff Responsible for Scheduling Interpreters in Court (Percentage of Respondents Marking Each Option)

Courts reported scheduling contract court interpreters primarily through court administrators (48%), court clerks (39%), other court staff (i.e., administrative assistants), and interpreter coordinators (25%) (Figure 29).

How does your court locate court interpreters for assignments? Mark all that apply.

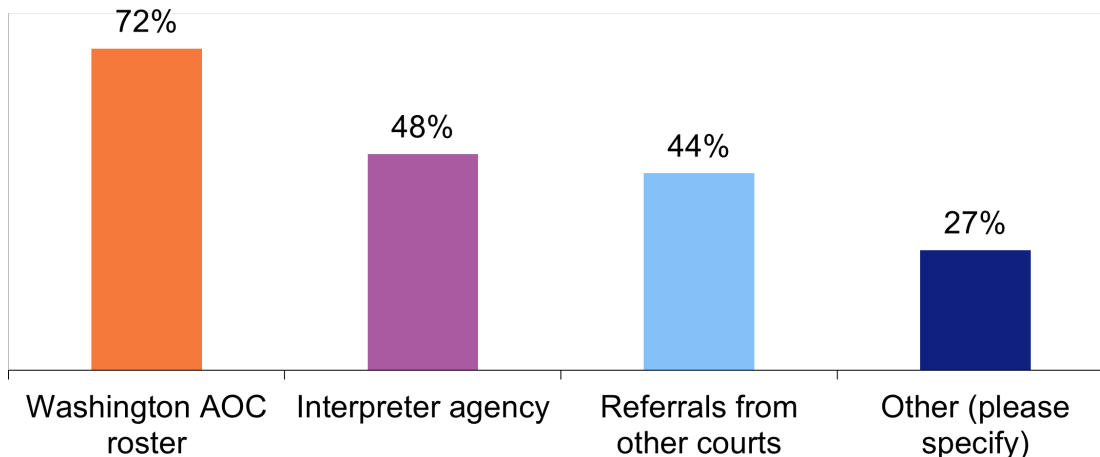


Figure 30: Methods Used by Courts to Locate Interpreters for Assignments (Percentage of Respondents Marking Each Option)

As demonstrated in Figure 30, 72% of courts find contract court interpreters via the Washington AOC roster. Other methods include interpreter agencies (48%), referrals from other courts (44%), and various other methods such as scheduling portals, personal knowledge/direct contacts, and internal lists (27%). Focus groups revealed that in cases where direct hiring was challenging, courts often resorted to interpreter agencies as a last resort.

What are the scheduling practices your court uses for scheduling court interpreters and what is the frequency of use for each practice on a scale from 'Always' to 'Never'.

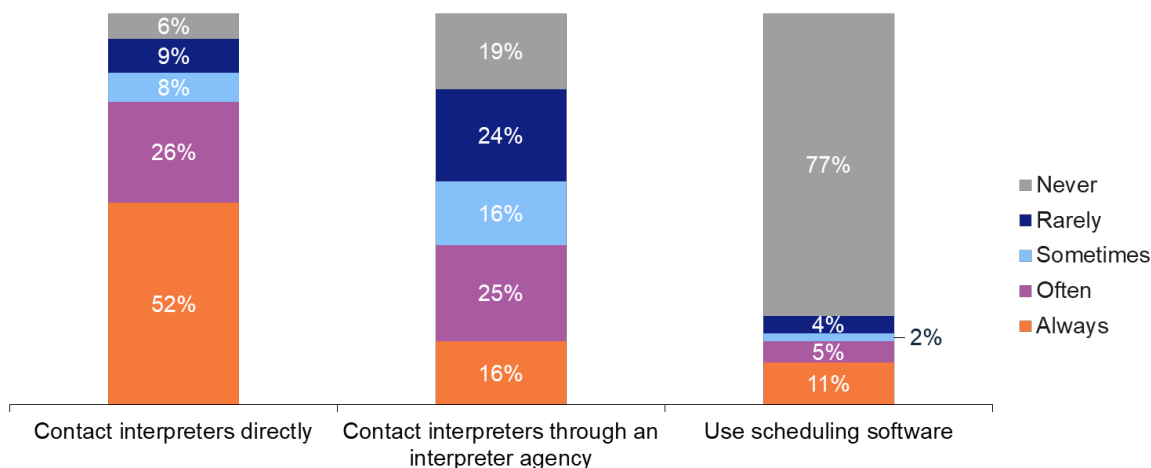


Figure 31: Practices Used by Courts to Schedule Interpreters for Assignments

Additionally, the court focus group highlighted that courts also use individual practices, such as calling or emailing interpreters directly, particularly in smaller courts where this is the primary scheduling mechanism. In these instances, the interpreter coordinator typically assumes the responsibility for scheduling tasks. 52% always contact interpreters directly (which may include mass emails), and 77% never use scheduling software (Figure 31).

1Lingua and Interpreter IO are the mostly commonly used cloud-based platforms for managing interpreter scheduling

In the court survey, 11% of courts stated that they always use scheduling software. Of the nine respondents who noted purchasing software, three mentioned 1Lingua and three mentioned Interpreter IO, while three didn't specify the software. It is important to note that 1Lingua is officially out of service as of April 30, 2024, prompting some courts to contract with other scheduling providers.

In the court administrator focus group, it was noted that the courts using the scheduling software were overall satisfied with the system itself but still faced challenges in finding contract court interpreters for languages of lesser diffusion.

Remote assignments and travel time compensation are common strategies used by courts to address challenges with scheduling interpreters; increasing the pay rate is not

What tools or strategies does your court use to address the challenges experienced when scheduling interpreters? Mark all that apply and indicate frequency.

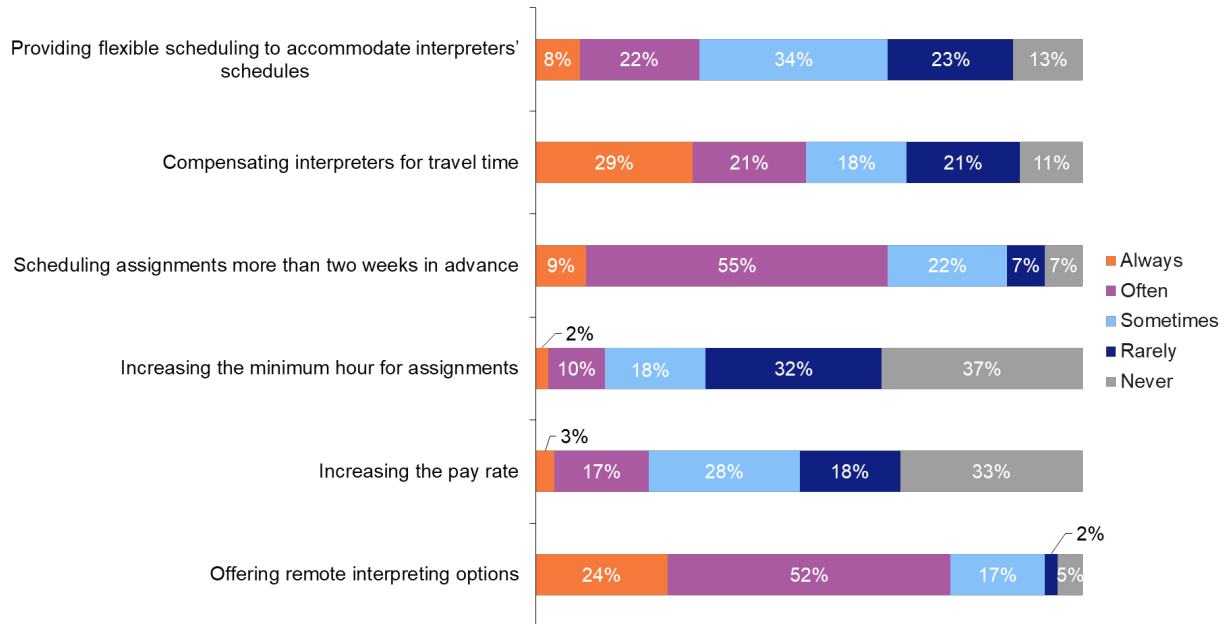


Figure 32: Strategies Courts Use to Address the Challenges Experienced When Scheduling Interpreters by Frequency (Percentage of Respondents Marking Each Option)

As demonstrated in Figure 32, 24% of courts always offer remote interpreting options, while 29% compensate contract court interpreters for travel time. Remote interpretation has helped with improving the availability of interpreters (78%), enhancing scheduling flexibility (71%), and achieving cost savings (29%).

Additionally, courts rarely increase the pay rate to address scheduling challenges. The survey results show that 33% of courts never increase the pay rate, while the remaining 67% do so with varying frequency: always (3%), often (17%), sometimes (28%), and rarely (18%). This demonstrates that increasing the pay rate is not a common strategy used by courts to address scheduling challenges.

Courts experience challenges scheduling for 54 languages

The top 5 languages reported by courts include: American Sign Language, Marshallese, Mixteco, Chuukese, Russian. Note that these languages were all categorized in the high

demand language group based on the LAIRP dataset methodology described in the previous section.

Recruitment & Retention

Outreach and recruitment of new contract court interpreters into the profession led by WA courts are lacking, and rely heavily on referrals and website traffic

Does your court conduct any outreach or recruitment activities for new interpreters entering the legal field?

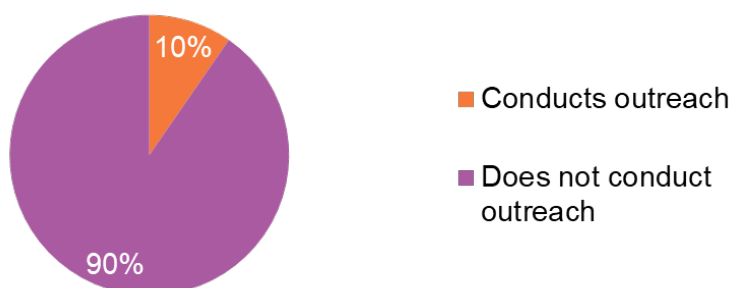
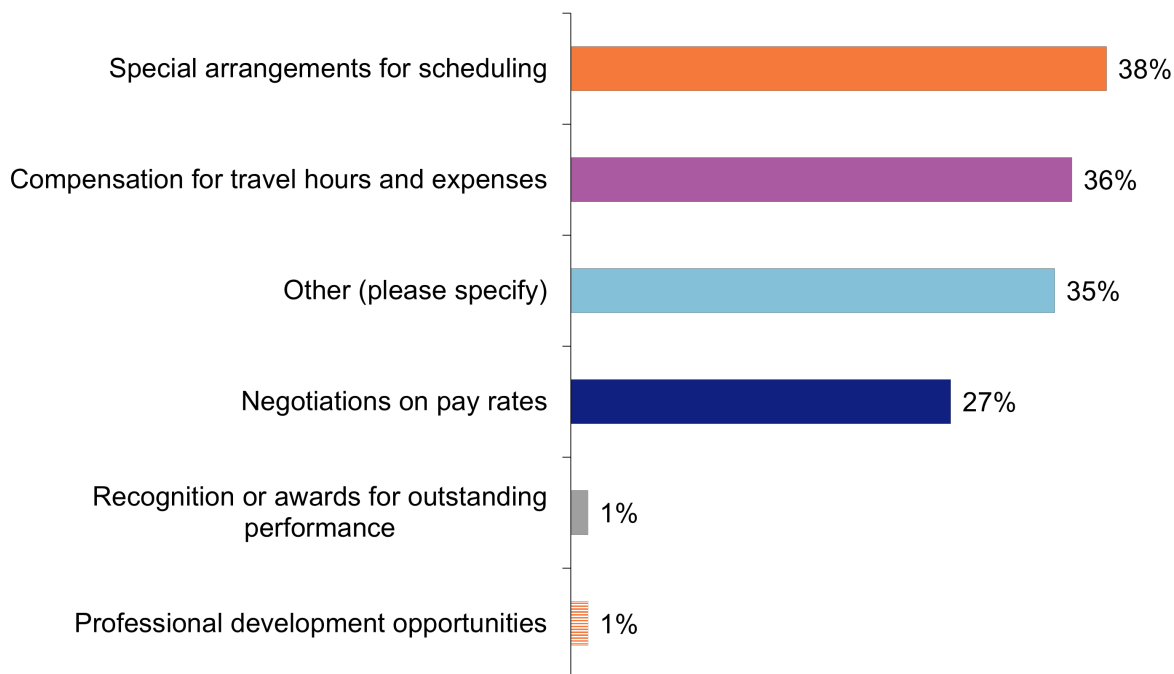


Figure 33: Percentage of Courts Conducting Outreach and Recruitment Activities for New Interpreters Entering the Legal Field vs. Not Conducting

According to the Court Administrator survey, 90% of courts do not conduct outreach or recruitment activities for new interpreters entering the field (Figure 33).

What strategies and incentives does your court offer to interpreters to encourage them to work in your court? Mark all that apply.



Note: This chart excludes categories with 0% values. This may not capture the full range of the data.

Figure 34: Strategies and Incentives Offered by Courts to Encourage Interpreters to Work in Their Courts (Percentage of Respondents Marking Each Option)

While outreach is minimal, courts do implement various strategies and incentives to encourage contract court interpreters to work at their court (Figure 34).

Some of the most used strategies included special arrangements for scheduling (38%), compensation for travel hours and expenses (36%), flexible work arrangements (30%), and negotiations on pay rates (27%). However, professional development opportunities were mentioned by only one respondent, and there were no responses indicating bonuses for consistent availability and opportunities for career advancement are offered. Most of the 'other' responses indicated that no strategies are in place.

Recommendations

6. Recommendations

Compensation Policies

As noted in this report, the Washington state court system is a non-unified system and as such, the courts across the state independently set and govern court policy at a local level. As a non-unified court system, the AOC has limited ability to set statewide payment policies, resulting in local courts throughout the state having various compensation policies and pay rates for contract court interpreters. While some courts have standardized contracts with fixed hourly pay rates, other courts regularly negotiate and set rates with interpreters by assignment. Such variances in policies and rates can contribute to courts competing against each other for the same often scarce resources. Variations in rates and other payment policies can also contribute to more negotiations between individual interpreters and courts, which can result in interpreters within the same language receiving different pay rates for the same type of work – even at times within the same court.

The survey and focus group results indicate that a substantial number of courts and many interpreters would be open to statewide standardized pay ranges and compensation policies. Courts participating in the focus groups reported being open to standardized rates if the rate ranges were feasible for courts with smaller overall budgets since the AOC reimburses only part of the interpreter cost. Due to time constraints during the focus group sessions, not all interpreters had the opportunity to share their thoughts on standardized rates. The interpreters who were able to share their thoughts towards standardized rates stated that they were open to standardized rate ranges if the established rates were “fair.”

In exploring compensation rates and practices that interpreters may find fair, many interpreters in the focus groups indicated that the current hourly rates offered by most courts were satisfactory for remote work. However, interpreters noted that half-day and full-day scheduling blocks should be used particularly for in-person assignments as this assists the interpreter with committing to a court assignment rather than cobbling together other non-court assignments for a day’s work. Interpreters also commented that courts should provide additional payment for in-person work to support travel expenses, including mileage, parking, and travel time.

Finally, regarding fair payment, interpreters stated that courts should pay credentialed interpreters higher rates than non-credentialed interpreters in languages for which a credentialing option is available since credentialed interpreters have demonstrated interpretation and language proficiency abilities through requisite exam processes.

As a result of these findings, the AOC is recommended to develop and implement detailed statewide compensation guidelines for contractor court interpreters. These guidelines should provide a framework for uniform application across all courts, with flexibility to accommodate exceptional circumstances. Key elements should include:

a. Hourly Ranges for Court Interpreting Work

Implementation by AOC

- Establish a recommended minimum hourly range rate across courts based on the standard hourly rates currently observed across counties. This range for credentialed contract court interpreters could be set as follows:

Recommended Hourly Rate Ranges	FY2025 (7/2024-6/2025)
Credentialed Spoken Language Interpreters	\$70-\$85
Credentialed ASL Interpreters	\$85-\$100

These ranges allow for slight variations based on local court budgets and specific market conditions.

To ensure that the recommended rates keep up with the rising cost of living, the FY2025 recommendations account for inflation. According to recent data, the average annual inflation rate has been approximately 3%. Applying this rate to the FY2023 data provides a basis for the FY2025 recommendations.

The recommended hourly rate ranges are derived from an analysis of historical LAIRP compensation data for court interpreters, incorporating both actual and inflation-adjusted averages for FY2022 and FY2023 (see Table 1 and Table 2). Additionally, courts should have the flexibility to offer variable rates within this range depending on the preparation required for different types of interpreting assignments. For instance, additional time for preparatory work for multi-day trials could be compensated.

These recommended ranges aim to provide a competitive compensation structure that accounts for inflation and ensures consistency across the state. They also allow for necessary adjustments based on local conditions such as regional language demand, varying levels of budgets, and the aging contract court interpreter workforce, which affect the demand and supply of interpreters for specific languages.

With the data gathered from the LAIRP and insights from our research, the range of rates for FY2025 should at a minimum account for inflation. Additionally, the AOC should continue to monitor national trends with regard to court interpreter payment. As noted in the study, interpreters report receiving higher pay for court interpreting assignments outside of the Washington courts. While this may be due to higher negotiated rates for languages in which there is a scarcity of interpreters and/or because of negotiated half-day or full-day payment, interpreters report pay rate as a top incentive for recruitment and retention.

b. Rate Guidelines Based on Work Setting and Assignment Type

Implementation by AOC

- Introduce rate guidelines that differentiate between in-person and remote work, including a two-hour minimum for remote assignments and half-day or full-day minimums for in-person assignments.
- Recommend that courts implement an interpreter calendar. This calendar would optimize contract court interpreters' time by organizing their assignments into fixed blocks of time, potentially combining multiple interpreting needs into a single block where feasible, to fully utilize an interpreter's availability during the scheduled block, increasing efficiency.

c. Compensation Based on Credential Status

Implementation by AOC

- Provide continued guidance to courts for using credentialed court interpreters (and avoid using non-credentialed interpreters) in languages for which credentialing options are available.

Implementation by the courts

- Define rate ranges that favor interpreters with the Washington AOC's Certified or Registered status, acknowledging their verified skills and promoting a professional standard across the industry.
- Ensure that credentialed interpreters receive higher compensation by giving contractual preference to credentialed interpreters, particularly for high-stakes or complex court cases.

d. Language Access and Interpreter Reimbursement Program (LAIRP)

Implementation by AOC

- Considering the proposed increase in interpreter rates, seek additional LAIRP funding to provide sufficient reimbursement and adequately counterbalance the increased budgetary burden on courts.

Implementation by the courts

- Participate in the LAIRP which provides reimbursement for qualifying interpreter events and other approved language access related expenses for cost savings options. The LAIRP promotes quality of interpreter services by reimbursing events with the use of credentialed interpreters for credentialed languages.

e. Comprehensive Travel Compensation

Implementation by AOC

- Develop guidelines for compensating travel expenses, including mileage, parking (where it is not provided or difficult to obtain), and travel time, particularly for assignments that are at a significant distance (e.g., 40 miles or more) from the interpreter's residence.
- Ensure that these policies are equitable and cover the actual costs incurred by interpreters, thus supporting their willingness to accept assignments irrespective of location.

Implementation by the courts

- Consider building in travel time incentives in the interpreter contracts/policies for all in-person assignments to account for additional time for travel and navigating through the courthouse.

f. Flexibility in Rate Negotiation

Implementation by the courts

- Provide the framework for negotiating rates under special circumstances, such as assignments requiring interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion or in languages with a great shortage, or assignments requiring exceptional expertise or immediate coverage.
- Clearly outline the criteria and processes for such negotiations to ensure transparency and fairness.

g. Regular Feedback and Rate Adjustment Mechanisms

Implementation by the courts

- Establish mechanisms for the annual review of compensation rates, demand for interpreters, and working conditions to ensure competitiveness and fairness.
- Actively solicit feedback from both interpreters and court staff regularly to inform necessary adjustments and policy updates.

Statewide Contract Solutions

Courts across the state employ varied methods for scheduling interpreters, and many are satisfied with their current systems, as noted above, showing little interest in changing their software solutions. However, there is a notable interest in standardizing other aspects of the contracting process. During focus group discussions, several courts and interpreters expressed a desire for more standardized contracting processes. As such, recommendations in two areas are proposed: contract templates and invoicing procedures.

a. Statewide Contract Templates

Implementation by AOC

- Consider creating standardized contract templates that include basic assignment and payment policy terms. These templates would provide a consistent foundation that courts across the state could adopt to meet local needs. These templates would

simplify the contracting process, ensuring that all interpreters across the state work under similar terms, which could help in clarifying expectations and responsibilities in interpreter assignments.

b. Invoicing Process

Implementation by AOC

- Create standardized invoicing templates that can be universally utilized by courts across the state including payment processing terms. These templates would ensure that all interpreters submit invoices in a consistent format, simplifying the process for courts to review and process payments.
- Encourage courts to integrate these standardized invoicing templates and payment terms into their existing financial systems.

Scheduling & Assignment Practices

Scheduling Systems and Interpreter Contact

As with compensation policies, courts throughout the state also have various scheduling practices. Some courts directly contact contract court interpreters via email or by phone for assignments, while other courts use web-based portals that list available jobs which court interpreters can accept on a first come, first served basis. In addition to these practices, court interpreters reported that they receive mass emails regarding contract assignments from both courts and agencies. These emails are sent to all or many interpreters in a language, requiring interpreters to often compete with each other to respond and accept an assignment as soon as they receive the email.

Courts with web-based portals reported satisfaction with their individual solutions and the majority of those participating in focus group discussions did not express an interest in participating in a statewide scheduling solution, such as a software system implemented by AOC. However, at least one smaller court in the focus group session indicated interest in a potential web-based scheduling solution if developed by the AOC and others without their own web-based scheduling solution may be interested as well.

In terms of the use of web-based scheduling portals, it is important to note that results from the interpreter focus groups indicate that interpreters largely prefer direct communication and building relationships with a court, particularly with a court interpreter coordinator. While survey results indicate that interpreters participate in various scheduling practices, including

obtaining and accepting assignments via a web portal, the focus group participants across languages reported dissatisfaction with scheduling and accepting assignments through the web portals and mass emails. Interpreters noted that the web-based solutions required them to always be on alert for available jobs. This has been known to cause burnout and frustration. Additionally, these scheduling processes removed any direct interactions from the scheduling equation and often prevented the interpreter from learning more about a particular assignment before accepting the job. Interpreters also noted that they often do not know if an assignment has been covered.

a. Uniform Scheduling Software

Implementation by AOC

- The AOC is in the process of developing business requirements for a statewide interpreter scheduling system. Consider aligning the statewide scheduling system, to the web-based portals currently used by some of the larger courts to create as much statewide uniformity in interpreter scheduling as possible. This software could mirror successful elements from existing systems used by larger courts to ensure compatibility and ease of adoption.

b. Enhancement of Web-based Scheduling Portals

Implementation by the courts

- Incorporate a tiered notification system within scheduling portals to manage interpreter notification process with targeted communication. Courts can select predefined groups of interpreters to receive notifications in sequential layers. Courts would have the flexibility to automate the process or move onto the next tier manually as needed.
- To enhance interpreter satisfaction and engagement, courts should complement web-based scheduling with direct interactions between court interpreter coordinators and interpreters. This approach would help maintain the personal touch that interpreters value. Alternatively, courts may also use the scheduling software as an initial screening of potential interpreters interested in and available for assignments but continue to use a secondary scheduling method which may include direct contact with the interpreter to provide additional information about an assignment.
- Improve web portals to provide detailed information about assignments upfront. This enhancement should include specifics about the case and requirements, helping interpreters make informed decisions before accepting assignments.

- Implement or refine notification systems within these portals to alert interpreters about new assignments and changes to existing ones, reducing the need for constant monitoring. If feasible, integrate features into the scheduling software that provide real-time updates to interpreters about the status of assignments, such as whether a job has been taken or if it is no longer available.

Scheduling Minimums

As noted in the findings and analysis, court interpreters reported strong preferences for scheduling blocks for assignments, which help them manage their workloads more effectively. While many interpreters reported satisfaction with a two-hour block for remote work, there is a growing demand for half-day and full-day minimum blocks for in-person assignments. Offering assignments with half-day and full-day minimum blocks allows interpreters to plan their interpreting work and potentially fill their contract work portfolio for the day. This structured approach not only enhances job satisfaction by allowing interpreters to secure meaningful and well-compensated engagements but also improves their availability for court sessions without the distraction of scheduling conflicts from other commitments.

The following recommendations are directed at courts, recognizing that the specific needs and operational dynamics can vary significantly across courts.

c. Implementation of Minimum Scheduling Blocks

Implementation by the courts

- Continue implementing a standard two-hour minimum block for remote interpreting assignments, as this duration has reported high satisfaction among interpreters.
- Introduce minimum half-day and full-day blocks for in-person assignments. This approach allows interpreters to efficiently plan their day around substantial work blocks, reducing the likelihood that they will seek piecemeal work elsewhere. These longer blocks contribute to job satisfaction as interpreters can secure meaningful, well-compensated work without the need to juggle multiple short assignments across different locations or industries.

d. Optimizing Interpreter Utilization

Implementation by AOC

- Compile and share a list of appropriate tasks that interpreters could perform beyond their primary interpreting duties. This list would help courts fully utilize the scheduled time, especially when interpreting services are unexpectedly not needed for the entire block.
- Regularly solicit feedback from courts and interpreters on the effectiveness of these scheduling practices and supporting courts as necessary to address any challenges or to further improve the system.

Implementation by the courts

- Consider using (or continue using) an interpreter calendar, batching cases that require the same language services within these longer blocks. This practice not only maximizes the use of an interpreter's time but also simplifies logistical arrangements for both the courts and the interpreters. Such efforts could be implemented to utilize interpreters throughout assignments at one court, or multiple courts co-located in the same physical location could coordinate to implement an interpreter calendar that utilizes an interpreter or interpreters in different assignments throughout co-located courts. Interpreters working in blocks of time could also be made available to other courts in other counties or regions via remote services to support courts across the state, especially when working with languages of lesser diffusion or with languages for which there are statewide shortages.
- Courts with designated staff for scheduling contract court interpreters can explore opportunities for interpreters to engage in additional related tasks within their scheduled blocks if their primary interpreting duties conclude early or if there are delays. Potential tasks could include working in self-help centers, assisting with document translation (if qualified), or providing language services in other court departments.
- Categorize new and existing interpreters, highlighting their preference for remote, in-person, or both, to assist courts with scheduling.

Incentivizing Contract Court Interpreter Assignment Acceptance

While compensation and scheduling practices feature heavily in whether a court interpreter prioritizes a court assignment, interpreters also noted other factors that can incentivize interpreters to accept court work. Throughout the focus groups, court interpreters noted the

importance of being respected by the courts and building and maintaining relationships with courts and the court interpreter coordinator. Many interpreters reported prioritizing work for the courts not only because they believe in the mission of providing access to justice, but also because they have strong relationships with a court and feel respected by the court's staff. Court interpreters also stressed the significant amount of preparation and the ongoing maintenance of interpretation skills needed to ensure accurate interpretation in the courts.

The following recommendations emphasize ways in which the AOC and the courts can continue to recognize interpreters and incentivize interpreters to accept court assignments.

e. Building Relationships

Implementation by the courts

- Maintain personal connections with interpreters, even in the use of broad, impersonal scheduling systems.
- Regularly engage interpreters through communication and feedback sessions beyond scheduling, to enhance rapport and trust. This engagement should be with AOC and the local courts.
- Collaborate with neighboring courts to organize Interpreter Appreciation events, fostering a deeper appreciation for the profession and facilitating communication about challenges and opportunities to build stronger relationships.
- Establish interpreter recognition programs, such as 'Interpreter of the Month,' to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of interpreters serving individual courts.

f. Preparation and Professional Support

Implementation by the courts

- Provide interpreters with detailed case information and access to relevant files in advance, especially for complex trials.
- Offer resources such as glossaries and preparatory materials related to their upcoming assignments.

g. Workplace Benefits

Implementation by AOC

- Enhance support for the courts by developing guidance and tip sheets that assist in implementing local practices aimed at fostering relationship-building and creating positive work environments.

Implementation by the courts

- Facilitate early access to court facilities for interpreters, allowing them more time on-site before their assignments begin. This helps in reducing travel-related stress and ensures interpreters are better prepared and punctual.
- Expand the practice across all courts of providing dedicated spaces for interpreters to use for assignment preparation and/or to take breaks when not interpreting.
- Implement a metrics system to track interpreter hours in both in-person and remote assignment to incentivize continuous commitment to the court. This could involve rewarding interpreters who consistently meet a predetermined standard with benefits such as becoming a preferred interpreter for the court or allowing for a more flexible cancellation policy.

Recruitment & Retention

For many interpreters, compensation was noted as a significant driver for recruitment and retention. Beyond financial incentives, interpreters value being respected as skilled professionals, and they noted the importance of relationships when evaluating whether to prioritize court work. As remote work becomes increasingly common across various industries, the AOC and individual courts are seeing a growing interest in remote opportunities from existing interpreters seeking flexible work arrangements. Finally, interpreters emphasized the extensive skills-building and professional development needed to enter the court interpreter field and to maintain proficiency in court interpretation.

a. Compensation and Workplace Benefits as a Recruitment and Retention Tool

Implementation by AOC

- Provide guidelines to courts to regularly review and potentially increase the average hourly rates for contract court interpreters and adjust for inflation to stay competitive in the market.
- Continue to provide guidance to courts on implementing statewide compensation practices, such as paying for mileage and travel time, ensuring that Washington State courts remain an attractive option for interpreters.

Implementation by the courts

- Extend workplace perks that some courts already offer to other court professionals, such as access to breakrooms, dedicated parking spaces, and expedited court entry options.
- Consider offering performance-based bonuses or pay increases based on tenure and evaluations.

b. Remote Work Opportunities

Implementation by AOC

- Develop and implement a marketing strategy that highlights the availability of remote interpreting opportunities along with in-person assignments. This strategy should target both newly credentialed interpreters and experienced professionals seeking more flexible work arrangements.
- Provide tailored training sessions to courts, equipping them with best practices and the necessary skills to effectively utilize remote interpreting services in their proceedings.
- Along with ILAC, provide guidelines and recommendations for remote interpreting to ensure consistency and quality of interpreter services.

c. Development and Mentorship Programs

Implementation by AOC

- Launch webinars and training sessions specifically designed for interpreter candidates and newly credentialed interpreters, particularly for those languages where there is an identified shortage. Offer roles for existing interpreters to participate as paid instructors or coaches, fostering a professional development ecosystem within the interpreting community.

Implementation by the courts

- Develop mentorship programs where experienced court interpreters can guide new or prospective interpreters. Consider compensating mentors for their time and expertise.

d. Marketing and Outreach

Implementation by AOC

- Design and execute a comprehensive marketing campaign that promotes the unique advantages of becoming a court interpreter. This campaign should emphasize competitive compensation, the potential for remote work, professional development opportunities, and the valued status of interpreters within the judicial system.
- Utilize targeted advertising on platforms frequented by potential recruits, such as LinkedIn, professional forums for linguists, university career services, and social media platforms. These ads should directly address the interests and values of both new entrants to the workforce and experienced professionals seeking a career change or enhancement.

Implementation by the courts

- Collect testimonials from current court interpreters who can speak to the benefits of their roles, including the impact of flexible scheduling, professional growth opportunities, and the supportive community within the courts. These testimonials should be featured prominently in marketing materials, on the courts' website, and during recruitment events.

Other Considerations

In addition to the recommendations provided above, there are other strategies that the AOC may want to consider and further research as part of a statewide effort to secure qualified interpreters and language services for the courts across counties. Strategies include:

- Explore the coordination and sharing of remote interpreters in high-demand languages across courts. While individual courts may not have enough volume to support a full-time interpreter, the AOC could assist in the development of a coordinated system to share a staff interpreter or contract court interpreter hired for a block of time to work across courts. Such an effort could focus on interpreters in high-demand languages providing remote services to courts across the state or for multiple courts within a specific county or region as needed and logistically feasible.
- Develop a statewide process to identify and note on the AOC's interpreter roster with remote interpreting experience, training, and adequate equipment to perform remote interpreting assignments. By including this information on the AOC's roster, courts could ensure that they are contracting interpreters with appropriate remote interpreting experience and the necessary equipment for remote assignments.
- Pursue an expanded LAIRP budget for court interpreter reimbursements statewide so as to ensure that courts across the state can provide standardized rates within identified ranges and travel compensation, such as mileage, parking, and travel time.
- Explore a tiered credentialing system for interpreters allowing multiple levels of credentials for specific languages to bridge the gap of supply and demand. This system would be implemented exclusively for languages identified as having high demand but low supply ensuring quality control is maintained.

Conclusion

7. Conclusion

This comprehensive study, conducted by WAI on behalf of the AOC, reveals critical insights into the current state of court interpreter services in Washington State, highlighting the multifaceted challenges faced by both contract court interpreters and the courts. As the report notes, the demand for court interpreters continues to rise, while the supply of credentialed interpreters remains static, or in some cases, is declining.

Contract court interpreters across various languages, despite valuing their work with the courts and often prioritizing such assignments, face several sources of dissatisfaction and frustration. The unpredictability of steady work, the potential piecemeal hours of contract court assignments, and the administrative burden associated with navigating different contracting processes across the state can make contracting with the courts challenging. Additionally, because pay rates for contract court interpreters vary across courts, both courts and interpreters can spend a significant amount of time negotiating contract terms for each assignment.

As the report notes, there are currently discrepancies in interpreter payment across courts statewide. These discrepancies include differences in payment for contract court interpreters across various languages and even among interpreters of the same language. Both contract court interpreters and the courts seem open to the idea of standardized pay ranges, which could promote more uniformity among courts and reduce the need for individualized negotiations for every assignment. Contract court interpreters also specifically emphasize that these rates should be fair, further underscoring the critical role compensation plays in the interpreters' interest and ability to accept court assignments.

To support the establishment of competitive hourly pay ranges that could be utilized by courts statewide, the report reviews current and historical pay rates for court interpreters across the state, as well as rates for court interpretation and similar work in other states and industries. This research led to the following recommended hourly pay ranges for court interpreters for FY2025¹⁸:

¹⁸ Pay ranges have been based on the hourly rates obtained for FY 2022 and FY 2023. Further exploration of factors, such as cost of living indexes could be considered, to determine if the hourly rates currently offered by courts should be increased.

Recommended Hourly Rate Ranges	FY2025 (7/2024-6/2025)
Credentialed Spoken Language Interpreters	\$70-\$85
Credentialed ASL Interpreters	\$85-\$100

In addition to recommending increasing rates for FY2025, the report also suggests the AOC continue to monitor pay rates for court interpreters nationally, as well as interpreter rates in other industries. Monitoring compensation trends will help to ensure that Washington State Courts remain competitive, encouraging contract court interpreters to prioritize working with the Washington court system over other potential contract interpreter opportunities. The report highlights that providing a competitive pay rate can also enhance recruitment efforts, aiding in the development of a robust pipeline of new court interpreters. Furthermore, the report recommends seeking additional LAIRP funding to provide sufficient reimbursement and adequately counterbalance the increased budgetary burden on courts.

Although this report initially focused on court interpreter compensation through pay rates, the findings from surveys and focus groups uncovered a series of other factors that influence court interpreter acceptance and prioritization of assignments. To support the retention of current interpreters, as well as incentivize the development of new court interpreters, the report highlights compensation policies and operational practices that would make contracting with the courts more efficient and attractive for court interpreters. Such efforts include:

- Compensating interpreters for travel for in-person assignments, including payment for mileage, travel time, and parking.
- Offering half-day and full-day assignments for court interpreter work, especially for in-person assignments, to minimize the need for interpreters to piece together different work assignments across industries for a day's work.
- Providing more remote interpreting opportunities when logistically feasible and appropriate for the case type.
- Simplifying the overall contracting process through uniform scheduling practices and the use of standardized contract templates and invoices.
- Continuing to recognize and treat interpreters as highly skilled professionals, by providing professional benefits, such as dedicated breakrooms, preparation time, and employee access to the courts.

Because changes to compensation policies alone will not address the ongoing issues with interpreter scarcity, the report also provides strategies to assist the AOC and the courts in recruiting new interpreters while effectively utilizing the current pool of interpreters available. Recommendations include outreach and marketing efforts to attract individuals to the court interpreter pathway and mentoring and professional development activities to support court interpreter candidates and newly credentialed interpreters with the development of the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the profession.

In terms of efficient utilization of interpreters, the report offers considerations for a more broader use of interpreter calendars, allowing courts to schedule and use interpreters across assignments during dedicated blocks of time. Additional considerations also include exploring the coordination and sharing of remote interpreters in high-demand languages across courts and considering the development of a tiered credentialing system to address shortages of interpreters in specific languages.

As a non-unified system, the AOC may face some limitations in implementing compensation policies and practices statewide. Therefore, the recommendations in this report have been crafted to highlight the AOC's role in providing courts with guidance, tools, and support, as well as to outline local court policies and practices that can improve the contract experience for court interpreters throughout the state. By working together, the AOC and the courts can continue to build a robust and reliable court interpreter service framework for LEP and D/HH/DB individuals, ensuring that all individuals have equitable access to justice in the Washington State court system.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Federal and State Contract Court Interpreter Compensation Rates and Travel Payment¹⁹

U.S. Federal Court Interpreter Program	Governance Structure ²⁰	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Federal	<p>Federally Certified Interpreters: Full-Day: \$566 Half-Day: \$320 Overtime: \$80 per hour or part thereof</p> <p>Professionally Qualified Interpreters: Full-Day: \$495 Half-Day: \$280 Overtime: \$70 per hour or part thereof</p> <p>Language Skilled Interpreters (non-certified) Full-Day: \$350 Half-Day: \$190 Overtime: \$44 per hour or part thereof</p> <p>*Note: publicly available information notes only half-day and full-day payment. Hourly rates may be paid for overtime.</p>	<p>No payment will be provided for travel time within the local commuting area of the court location where the contract court interpreter is working. The local commuting distance to the courthouse will be set at the discretion of the court. In the absence of a court-specific local commuting region, it will be defined as a 30-mile radius from the courthouse.</p> <p>When a contract court interpreter is required to travel to a court location that is beyond the local commuting distance from the interpreter's residence, using common carrier air or ground transportation, on a day prior to a court proceeding, the court</p>

¹⁹ Information included in this chart reflects publicly available information as of May 2024. Information has been obtained through individual state websites and through information reported here: <https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/language-access/resources-for-program-managers/lap-map/map>

²⁰ In reviewing information on the governance structures of state courts, the WAI team was unable to find publicly available information (or consistent use) of standardized terms, such as "unified" or "non-unified" for a number of state court systems included in the analysis. To avoid errors in reporting the governance structure of the courts included in the analysis, the WAI team suggests using the publicly available information pertaining to the coordination and supervision of court interpreters across the states included in this state map: <https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/language-access/resources-for-program-managers/lap-map/map>

			<p>will pay a travel time fee based on the time in travel, equal to the applicable half or full-day rate, plus the overtime rate for any hour or fraction thereof over eight hours.</p> <p>Contract court interpreters who reside within the court's local commuting region will not receive reimbursement for mileage, parking, taxis, public transportation, or other travel expenses from their residence to the courthouse location.</p> <p>For contract court interpreters who reside outside the court's local commuting region, any assignment will specify if travel is authorized and the method of transportation that is authorized. The contract court interpreter will be reimbursed upon submission of a proper invoice and necessary receipts for authorized travel expenses in accordance with the Judiciary Staff Travel Regulation.</p>
Arizona Judicial Branch	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	Public information states that rates vary by language, skill, contract, and area.	No public information. Information states that Individual courts develop their own

		Typical ranges: \$30 - \$100 per hour.	process for obtaining and paying for interpreter services.
California Judicial Council	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	<p>Certified/Registered Interpreters</p> <p>Half-day: \$175</p> <p>Full-day: \$350</p> <p>Hourly: \$44</p> <p>Non-Certified/Non-Registered Interpreters</p> <p>Half-day: \$110</p> <p>Full-day: \$220</p> <p>Hourly: \$28</p>	<p>Reimbursement of travel expenses such as air transportation, lodging, meals, personal vehicle usage, and rental vehicle usage for interpreters must be made in accordance with judicial branch travel guidelines. If travel expenses, including travel time, are to be reimbursed, they must be addressed in the written agreement between the court and the interpreter.</p> <p>- Travel expense reimbursement limits are determined by the judicial branch and must be adhered to when the agreement is signed.</p> <p>- Rates for travel expenses, except for lodging, may not exceed the upper limits set by the judicial branch at the time the agreement is signed.</p> <p>- If the interpreter is required to travel outside of the half-day or full-day time frame, and travel</p>

			<p>time is negotiated as part of the agreement, the rate may not exceed the standard hourly compensation rate.</p> <p>The rate and method for calculating travel time must be included in the written agreement between the court and the interpreter, and the determination of travel time must be based on relevant travel conditions.</p>
Florida Supreme Court	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	<p>Certified: Spanish (\$60 per hour); Haitian Creole (\$90 per hour); Other Certified languages (\$120 per hour)</p> <p>Non-Certified: Spanish (\$45 per hour); Haitian Creole (\$75 per hour); Other languages (\$90 per hour)</p> <p>Interpreters get a two-hour minimum and then paid in 1/4 hour increments after.</p>	No public information found.
Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	<p>Certified: \$30-\$60 per hour (average)</p> <p>Registered: \$20-\$45 per hour (average)</p>	No public information found.

Idaho Administrative Office of the Courts	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Pa yment - Local Courts	<p>Master Level: \$44.00 an hour Certified: \$39.00 an hour Certified in Languages Other Than Spanish: Negotiate as appropriate. Conditionally Approved: \$27.50 an hour Registered Interpreters: Negotiate as appropriate.</p> <p>Unless otherwise negotiated, interpreters are compensated at a minimum for two hours.</p>	<p>Mileage is paid after an interpreter has traveled more than 30 miles one-way.</p> <p>Travel time is paid whenever an interpreter travels more than 40 miles one-way. Compensation for travel time is made at half the hourly rate.</p>
Illinois Courts	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Pa yment - Local Courts	Rates not publicly available. The pay rates vary by court.	No public information found.
Massachusetts Trial Court	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Pa yment - State Level	<p>Half-day rates: \$125 screened, \$200 certified; Full day rates: \$200 screened, \$300 certified; otherwise hourly (\$26/hr screened, \$40/hr certified, 2-hour minimum); Certified ASL: \$51-\$75/hr</p>	The Trial Court will provide the approved mileage rate to per diem court interpreters. The mileage rate and calculation methods are established by the Trial Court and may change in its discretion.
Maryland Judiciary	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Interpreter Coordination/Pa yment - Local Courts	<p>Certified Spoken Language: \$40-\$55 (per hour) Certified ASL: \$65-\$75 (per hour)</p>	No public information found.

Minnesota Judicial Branch	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Centralized State System	<p>Certified Spoken Language: \$65 (per hour)</p> <p>Non-Certified Spoken Language: \$55 (per hour)</p> <p>Off-Roster: \$35 (per hour)</p> <p>Certified ASL: \$86 (per hour)</p> <p>ASL Generalist: \$74 (per hour)</p> <p>For any assignment or interpreting work that is two (2) hours or less, the interpreter shall be paid for two (2) hours and shall be paid per minute (hourly rate/60) for any interpreting work that exceeds two (2) hours.</p>	Mileage will be paid according to the Federal IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate allowable on the date of travel, for travel to and from daily assignments.
North Carolina Judicial Branch	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Payment
	Program Centralized at State Level	<p>Spanish freelance interpreters' \$35 - \$55 per hour</p> <p>Languages Other than Spanish freelance interpreters' \$35 - \$65 per hour</p> <p>Certified ASL: \$35-\$75 per hour</p>	No public information found.
New Jersey Judiciary	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Court Interpreter Services Coordinated by Vicinage	<p>Approved Master: Half-day: \$287.80; Full-day: \$494.20; Hourly overtime- \$57.12</p> <p>Approved Journeyman: Half-day: \$226.24; Full-day: \$394.61; Hourly overtime - \$45.90</p>	When an assignment requires travel in excess of 60 miles roundtrip from home, the Judiciary agrees to reimburse the contract court interpreter for each additional mile beyond

		<p>Conditionally Approved: Half-day: \$152.80; Full-day: \$284.83; Hourly overtime - \$34.68</p> <p>Note: NJ also states that they pay specified hourly rates for preparation time and different hourly rates for interpretation by telephone.</p>	60 miles at a rate in accordance with the State of New Jersey Automobile Mileage Reimbursement Rate.
New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Court Interpreter Services Coordinated by Region	<p>Certified Spoken Language: \$55.00 per hour</p> <p>Non-Certified Spoken Language: \$38.00 per hour</p> <p>ASL Legal Specialist: \$72 per hour ASL Legally Qualified: \$60 per hour ASL Legal Apprentice: \$48 per hour</p> <p>Note: NM also includes specified hourly rates for travel time based on credential.</p> <p>Certified Spoken Language Travel Time: \$34.00 per hour</p> <p>Non-Certified Spoken Language Travel Time: \$19.00 per hour</p> <p>ASL Legal Specialist Travel Time: \$45.00 per hour ASL Legally Qualified Travel Time: \$39.00 per hour</p>	<p>Mileage will be reimbursed at the Supreme Court approved rate when round trip mileage is 30 miles or more. Mileage will not be paid for miles traveled between the interpreter's place of residence to a local (same city) court.</p> <p>Travel time will be compensated when the round trip mileage is 60 miles or more and will be paid at the rates noted in the Court Interpreter Payment Schedule to and from an assignment, unless travel to and/or from an assignment takes place while the interpreter is under guarantee.</p>

		ASL Legal Apprentice Travel Time: \$29.00 per hour	
Nevada Judicial Branch	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	Nevada credentialed (certified and registered) court interpreters shall be paid a minimum of \$49 per hour or the prevailing rate of the local court, whichever is higher.	Credentialed court interpreters should be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expense as consistent with the Nevada Judicial Branch and travel policy per diem rate, or any local policy governing such reimbursements.
New York State Unified Court System	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Centralized State Program	Per-Diem Freelance (Languages Other than Spanish): Half-day - \$170.00 Full-day - \$300.00 Per-Diem Freelance ASL: Half-day - \$170.00 Full-day - \$300.00	No public information found.
Oregon Judicial Department	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Unified State with Centralized Scheduling of Interpreters	OJD Certified Spoken Language Court Interpreter: \$57/hour OJD Certified ASL Court Interpreter: \$74/hour OJD Registered Court Interpreter: \$42/hour Non-Certified Interpreter (must be authorized): \$34/hour	Travel time is billed at ½ of the hourly interpreting rate. Travel to an Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) assignment location occurs before the block begins and is more than 40 miles each way. Travel from an OJD assignment location

		<p>Out-of-state interpreter: negotiable</p> <p>Interpreters scheduled in blocks of 2-8 hours</p>	<p>occurs after the block ends and is over 40 miles each way.</p> <p>Travel to or from an OJD assignment is over 40 miles each way and is during a block of 2 hours or less.</p> <p>Travel time is calculated using the mileage definition and this OJD formula: Travel time = (total mileage/50) x (0.5 x hourly interpreting rate) (i.e., total mileage divided by 50, times ½ of the hourly interpreting rate).</p>
Unified Judicial System of Pennsylvania	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	<p>Unified Court System/Interpreters</p> <p>Coordinated at District Level</p>	<p>Master: Full-day - \$475; Half-day - \$260; Hourly - \$80</p> <p>Certified: Full-day - \$400; Half-day - \$210; Hourly - \$65</p> <p>Qualified: Full-day - \$270; Half-day - \$140; Hourly - \$45</p> <p>Conditional: Full-day - \$200; Half-day - \$105; Hourly - \$35</p> <p>Registered: Full-day - \$390; Half-day - \$200; Hourly - \$65</p>	<p>Mileage will be paid at the prevailing rate in the county or court whenever the interpreter travels more than twenty-five (25) miles round trip to an assignment.</p> <p>Parking will be paid in full when no free parking exists within a five (5)-block radius of the assignment location. Parking will not be paid when free parking is provided.</p> <p>Travel time will be paid when the interpreter travels more than two (2) hours round trip from the</p>

			interpreter's normal business address or location to an assignment. Travel time will be paid at half (½) the hourly compensation rate for the interpreter's classification.
Texas Judicial Branch	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Interpreter Coordination/Payment - Local Courts	No public information. Hourly rates determined by the court and freelance interpreter.	No public information found.
The Judicial Branch of Utah	Governance Structure	Compensation Rates	Travel Pay
	Unified Court System/Interpreters Coordinated at District Level	Certified: \$52 per hour Approved: \$41 per hour Registered 1: \$41 per hour Conditionally Approved: \$23 per hour	<p>Court Interpreters are paid for the time they interpret, or a minimum fee based on the distance they travel, whichever is more. Mileage is calculated using a court-approved mileage chart.</p> <p>Interpreter are paid in accordance with the following:</p> <p>0 miles – 1 hour of pay 25 miles – 2 hours of pay 50 miles – 3 hours of pay 75 miles – 4 hours of pay</p>

Appendix B: Data Collection Tools

Contract Court Interpreter Survey

The Washington Administrative Office of the Courts is collaborating with We Amplify It ("WAI") to conduct a comprehensive interpreter compensation study. The aim is to address challenges in providing language access in Superior Courts and Courts of limited jurisdiction in Washington state. As part of this study, WAI invites independently contracted court interpreters to participate in a brief online survey.

This online survey should take approximately 10 minutes, and WAI kindly requests that it be completed by February 29, 2024.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

General Background Questions

General Background

1. What is your current age range?

- 18-30
- 31-45
- 46-60
- 61-75
- 76 or older

2. In what county in Washington state do you currently live?

[dropdown of Washington state counties]

3. In what languages do you work as a professional interpreter? Mark all that apply.

[dropdown of languages]

4. Which of the following interpreting credentials do you hold? Mark all that apply.

- Washington State Court Interpreter Credential (certified or registered)
- Federal Court Certification
- Court Interpreter Credential from a state other than Washington
- Immigration Court
- DSHS Medical
- DSHS CDI
- Specialist Certificate: Legal - SC:L
- Specialist Certificate: Legal - SC:L (written portion only)
- Other (please specify)

Interpreting Work

5. If you are not currently Court Certified or Registered in Washington, do you have plans to pursue this?

- Yes
- No
- Not available in my language(s)
- Not applicable

6. For how long have you been interpreting in the Washington courts?

- Less than one year
- 1 - 2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-20 years
- more than 20 years

7. In which counties do you most frequently work? Mark up to five.

[list of WA counties]

8. Based on your previously selected counties, in which courts do you most frequently work? Mark all that apply.

- Superior
- Juvenile
- District
- Municipal (please specify)

9. On average, how often do you work in the Washington courts as a court interpreter, in terms of interpreter assignments?

- 7-4 assignments per week
- Between 5 and 10 assignments per week
- More than 10 assignments per week
- At least once a month
- Less frequently than once a month

10. What methods do you typically use to accept court interpreting assignments? Mark all that apply.

- Direct contact from the court(s)
- Through an interpreter agency or language service company
- Utilizing a scheduling web portal
- Other (please specify)

11. Do you interpret for in-person court assignments?

- Yes
- No, I only interpret for remote court assignments

12. If you interpret in person, what is the average time spent traveling for in-person assignments?

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 1 hour to 1.5 hours
- 1.5 hours to 2 hours
- More than 2 hours

13. Please indicate where else you work as an interpreter and include the frequency for each. If you don't work as an interpreter in any of these industries, select "never".

	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
court / legal /judiciary	()	()	()	()	()
medical / healthcare	()	()	()	()	()
public and social services	()	()	()	()	()
business / private sector	()	()	()	()	()
educational / schools	()	()	()	()	()
scientific / technical conferences	()	()	()	()	()

media / TV / radio	()	()	()	()	()
military / armed forces / intelligence	()	()	()	()	()
religious / spiritual	()	()	()	()	()
sports / athletics	()	()	()	()	()
international events	()	()	()	()	()

14. Please select the top three factors that influence your decision to accept an interpreting assignment.

- pay rate
- job stability
- flexibility
- frequency of work
- required preparation time
- work environment stress
- other (please specify)

15. How often do you cancel one interpreting assignment to accept another one offered?

- Several times a week
- A few times per month
- A few times per year
- Almost never
- Never

Interpreter Compensation

16. What is the average hourly rate you typically receive for court interpretation in the Washington courts?

- Less than \$55
- \$56-\$65
- \$66-\$75
- \$76-\$85
- \$86-\$100
- More than \$100

17. What is the average hourly rate you typically receive for court interpretation assignments outside of the Washington courts?

- Less than \$55
- \$56-\$65
- \$66-\$75
- \$76-\$85
- \$86-\$100
- More than \$100
- I only work for Washington courts

18. Do you negotiate the hourly rate offered by the courts for interpreting assignments?

- Yes
- No

19. If yes, please indicate how frequently you negotiate the hourly rates offered by the courts:

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

20. Are you open to the idea of receiving a set rate for court interpreting, which would be the same rate for all courts statewide? By "set rate," we mean a fixed compensation rate whether it is a fixed hourly rate, a half day rate, or a full day rate.

- Very open
- Open
- Neutral
- Not open
- Not very open

21. What would be your primary motivation(s) for working at a set court interpreting rate offered by all courts? Mark all that apply.

- Predictability of income
- Simplification of billing and administration
- Increase in the number of assignments
- Potential to be scheduled for half-day or full-day assignments
- Other (please specify)

22. How frequently do you provide remote interpretation (by telephone or video) for the courts?

- Every day
- Several times a week
- A few times a month
- A few times per year
- I only interpret for in-person assignments

23. Please provide information about the hourly rates for remote interpretation for the courts.

- The hourly rate for remote interpretation is higher than in-person interpretation.
- The hourly rate for remote interpretation is lower than in-person interpretation.
- There is no difference in hourly rates for remote interpretation.

24. Do you provide remote interpretation for non-court assignments in other industries?

- Yes, every day
- Yes, several times a week
- Yes, a few times a month
- Yes, a few times per year

25. How do you prefer providing interpretation? Mark all that apply.

- In person
- Remotely by telephone
- Remotely by video

26. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each of the following statements.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
courts' scheduling processes	()	()	()	()	()
hourly rates paid by the courts for court interpretation	()	()	()	()	()

hourly minimums offered by the courts for court interpretation	()	()	()	()	()
----------------------------------------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

27. How did you first find out about court interpretation opportunities at the Washington courts? Mark all that apply.

- Court Website
- Administrative Office of the Courts outreach activities
- Referral from another interpreter
- Referral from court staff
- Job/Career Website (e.g. Indeed, LinkedIn)
- Career Fair
- Community Group
- Other (please specify)

28. What suggestions do you have for the local courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts to attract and retain more interpreters to the court interpreting profession? Mark all that apply.

- Offering competitive compensation
- Providing professional development opportunities
- Enhancing interpreter support services
- Streamlining the scheduling process
- Increasing outreach and awareness efforts
- Other (please specify)

WAI is conducting focus groups with court interpreters to gather additional valuable feedback and further explore the challenges and opportunities within language access services. Participants will receive 1.5 hours of continuing education credit with the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts. Please note that all responses during the focus group(s) will be reported anonymously in our study, and no identifiable data will be shared with the Washington Administrative Office of the Courts. If you are interested, we will contact you to schedule a convenient time for the session.

29. Would you be interested in participating in a 90-minute focus group session?

- Yes
- No

30. Please indicate your preferred time range(s) for the focus group session. Mark all that apply.

- Early morning: 7 to 9 AM
- Midday: 12 to 2 PM

- Evening: 5 to 8 PM
- Other (please specify)

31. Name

- First name
- Last name

32. Email

- Email address

33. Phone number

- Phone number

Thank you for your participation!

Court Administrators Survey

The Washington Administrative Office of the Courts is collaborating with We Amplify It (“WAI”) to conduct a comprehensive interpreter compensation study. The aim is to address challenges in providing language access in Superior Courts and Courts of limited jurisdiction in Washington state. WAI is inviting Washington State Courts to participate in a brief online survey as part of this study. The survey will cover pay rates, scheduling practices, and recruitment strategies for contracted court interpreters (“court interpreters”). Staff court interpreters are not part of the scope of this survey.

This online survey should take approximately 10 minutes, and WAI requests that it be completed by February 29, 2024.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Court Information

1. Which county court do you represent?

[drop down of 39 WA counties]

2. Please indicate the court(s) you represent. Mark all that apply.

- Superior
- Juvenile
- District
- Municipal (please specify): _____

3. How often does your court need interpreters for court proceedings?

- Daily in multiple languages
- Daily, mostly in 1-2 languages
- Several times a week
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Very rarely

Court Interpreter Scheduling

4. In your court, please indicate who typically schedules interpreters. Mark all that apply.

- Court Administrator
- Interpreter Coordinator
- Court Clerk
- Other Court Staff (please specify): _____

5. Please describe how your court locates court interpreters for assignments. Mark all that apply.

- Washington AOC roster
- Referrals from other courts
- Interpreter agency
- Other (Please specify): _____

6. Please indicate the scheduling practices your court uses for scheduling court interpreters and rate the frequency of use for each practice on a scale from 'Always' to 'Never':

Method	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Contact interpreters directly	()	()	()	()	()
Contact interpreters through an interpreter agency	()	()	()	()	()
Use scheduling software	()	()	()	()	()

7. If your court uses scheduling software, please indicate the type of software below. Mark all that apply.

- System developed in-house
- Purchased software (please specify)
- None of the above

8. Does your court schedule interpreters as part of an “interpreter calendar” in which one or more interpreters provide interpretation for multiple events during a scheduled block of time?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

9. What are some of the challenges your court experiences when scheduling court interpreters? Please select all that apply and indicate the frequency of such challenges.

Challenges	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Scarcity of interpreters	()	()	()	()	()
Interpreters negotiating higher rates than offered	()	()	()	()	()
Interpreters not showing up or canceling at the last minute	()	()	()	()	()
Interpreters not willing to travel for in-person assignment(s)	()	()	()	()	()

Interpreters preferring remote assignments only	()	()	()	()	()
Difficulty finding interpreters on short-notice or for emergency requests	()	()	()	()	()
Technological challenges for remote interpreting assignments	()	()	()	()	()

10. What tools or strategies does your court use to address the challenges experienced when scheduling interpreters? Mark all that apply and indicate frequency.

Strategies Employed	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Offering remote interpreting options	()	()	()	()	()
Increasing the pay rate	()	()	()	()	()
Increasing the minimum hour for assignments	()	()	()	()	()

Scheduling assignments more than two weeks in advance	()	()	()	()	()
Compensating interpreters for travel time	()	()	()	()	()
Providing flexible scheduling to accommodate interpreters' schedules	()	()	()	()	()

11. Does your court experience challenges when securing court interpreters for specific languages?

- Yes
- No

12. If yes, please indicate up to the top five languages in which your court experiences challenges when scheduling interpreters.

[list of languages]

Court Interpreter Compensation

13. Please indicate if your court has a payment policy for each of the following:

Payment Policy Topics	Yes	No	In Progress
Minimum Hours	()	()	()
Pay Rate (e.g. hourly, full day)	()	()	()
Pay Rate for In-Person Assignments	()	()	()

Pay Rate for Remote Assignments	()	()	()
Pay Rate for Trials	()	()	()
Policy for Late Cancellations	()	()	()
Travel Payment	()	()	()

14. Does your court use a standardized hourly rate for court interpreters?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. Please provide the average range of hourly rates your court pays for the following:

Interpret er Classific ation	Less than \$50	\$50- \$60	\$61- \$70	\$71 - \$80	\$81- \$90	\$91- \$100	Over \$100	Not Sure
Spoken Languag e Certified Interpret ers	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()
Spoken Languag e Registere d Interpret ers	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()
Spoken Languag e Non- Credenti aled Interpret ers	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()
ASL Credenti aled Interpret ers	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()

ASL Non-Credentialed Interpreters	()	()	()	()	()	()	()	()
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16. Would it be helpful to your court if there was a standardized statewide hourly rate (or full/half day rate) and payment policies for court interpreters? Standardized payment policies may include established billing increments for interpreter payments (hourly, by scheduled block, etc.), cancellation policies, and travel reimbursement (mileage, per diem, lodging).

- Yes
- No

17. If not, please indicate the concerns or reasons your court may have with a statewide standardized rate or standardized payment policies for court interpreters.

Remote Interpretation

18. How frequently does your court schedule remote court interpretation?

- Daily in multiple languages
- Daily, mostly in 1-2 languages
- Several times a week
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Very rarely
- Never

19. Please provide information about your court's hourly rate for remote interpretation (by telephone or video).

- The hourly rate for remote interpretation is higher than in-person interpretation.
- The hourly rate for remote interpretation is lower than in-person interpretation.
- There is no difference in hourly rates for remote interpretation.
- We do not provide remote interpretation.

20. Please indicate if remote interpretation has assisted with scheduling court interpreters in any of the following ways.

- Improved scheduling flexibility
- Cost savings
- Improved availability of interpreters
- Other (please specify)

Reimbursement

21. Does your court seek reimbursement for language access?

- Yes
- No

22. If your court does not seek reimbursement for language access, please select all the reasons that apply from the following options

- Lack of awareness or information on the reimbursement process
- The cost of interpreters is not significant enough to warrant reimbursement
- The reimbursement process is too complex or time-consuming
- Previous attempts to seek reimbursement were unsuccessful
- The court relies on other funding sources for language access
- The court uses staff interpreters only
- Lack of staff resources to handle reimbursement requests
- None of the above

Interpreter Recruitment and Retention

23. Does your court conduct any outreach or recruitment activities for new interpreters entering the legal field?

- Yes
- No

24. If yes, indicate the types of outreach and recruitment activities your court conducts. Select all that apply.

- Court Website
- AOC Website
- Referrals
- Job/Career Website (e.g. Indeed, LinkedIn)
- Career Fair
- Social Media
- Mentoring/shadowing opportunities Community Group (please specify)

25. What strategies and incentives does your court offer to interpreters to encourage them to work in your court? Mark all that apply.

- Negotiations on pay rates
- Special arrangements for scheduling
- Compensation for travel hours and expenses
- Bonuses for consistent availability
- Professional development opportunities
- Opportunities for career advancement
- Recognition or awards for outstanding performance
- Flexible work arrangements
- Other (please specify)

Thank you for participating!

Contract Court Interpreter Focus Group Questionnaire

Introductions

Please take a minute to tell us about yourself.

- For how long have you been an interpreter? And a court interpreter?
- For which language(s) do you interpret?
- Besides the WA courts, where else do you work as an interpreter?

Scheduling Practices and Accepting Court Assignments

- Tell us a bit about how you are currently contacted and scheduled for court assignments. Do you have any recommendations for improving the current process?
 - a. Probe: invoicing process
- What factors contribute to accepting a court interpreting assignment over other types of interpreting work?
 - a. Probe: Why? Please explain.
- What factors do you consider when accepting a remote interpreting assignment?
 - a. Probe: why? Please explain.
 - b. Probe: Are the factors you consider when accepting a remote interpreting assignment for court different from the factors you consider when accepting an in-person assignment for court? How?
 - c. Probe: pay, flexibility, frequency of work (as they are top 3 factors that influence decision to accept an assignment)

Compensation

- Do you feel that you are fairly compensated for your work as a court interpreter?
 - a. Probe: Why, why not?
 - b. Probe: Have you always felt this way?
- How does the compensation for court interpreting compare to other interpreting assignments available (i.e., other legal interpreting jobs, conference interpreting, business interpreting, medical interpreting, community interpreting, etc.)?
 - a. Probe: In your opinion, are the current hourly rates WA courts pay competitive? What makes them competitive or not?
- We understand that for some court interpreting assignments, interpreters may negotiate the offered rate provided by the WA court. When offered a court interpreter assignment, how do you negotiate the offered rate?
 - a. Probe: What factors contribute to the negotiations (why may you negotiate at certain times but not at others)? For example, travel, length of assignment, complexity of assignment, etc.
 - b. Probe: Do courts usually accept your negotiated rates?
 - c. Probe: If hesitant to negotiate, why?

- What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving payment policies across the courts?
 - a. Probe: minimum hourly rate, travel time, mileage
- Please share your thoughts on courts having a standardized pay rate across courts for contract court interpreters.
 - a. Probe: What are the pros and cons? In attracting more interpreters? County-wide, statewide?
 - b. Probe: How do you suggest a standardized rate be determined?
 - c. Probe: What are your preferences around half-day/full-day rates or hourly rates? Why?

Recruitment and Retention

- In your opinion, what strategies could be employed by local courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts to attract and retain more interpreters?
 - a. Probe: Please share any specific platforms, networks, or community groups
 - b. Probe: Please share how any of these efforts have worked in other states or industries
 - c. Probe: How can outreach activities be incorporated into court initiatives to recruit new interpreters?
 - d. Probe: Is there anything that you would specifically recommend recruiting additional interpreters in your language group?

Wrapping Up

- What other information would you like to share about court interpretation in Washington?
- What is your vision for the future of court interpreting in Washington? What key changes or developments would you like to see?
- Can you share any specific experiences or stories that have shaped your view of court interpreting in Washington?

Court Administrator Focus Group Questionnaire

Introductions

Please take a minute to tell us about your court and your role within the court.

- What court do you represent? What is your role?
- What is the top issue or top priority your court faces regarding court interpreters and language access at large?
 - a. Probe: why is this the top issue or priority?

Scheduling Practices and Contracting Interpreters

- Please tell us about your court's current scheduling practices for court interpreters. How does your court typically locate interpreters? When and why does your court use agencies for contracting court interpreters?
 - a. Probe: what are the benefits of these practices as they relate to contracting and retaining interpreters?

- b. Probe: what are the challenges of these practices as they relate to contracting and retaining interpreters?
 - c. Probe: Would your court be interested in using a statewide scheduling system developed by the AOC?
 - d. Probe: How does your court typically find non-credentialed interpreters for non-credentialed languages? Does your court have an internal roster, and would your court be open to sharing their resources with AOC and other courts?
 - e. Probe: How often is the interpreter scheduling policy reviewed?
- Tell me more about your experience contracting interpreters for in-person and remote assignments. What are the pros and cons for in-person vs. remote assignments?
 - a. Probe: How has the availability of interpreters changed for your court with remote assignments?
 - b. Probe: What other challenges does your court experience with regard to contracting interpreters?

Compensation

- What currently works well with how you compensate interpreters? How frequently does your court assess and adjust overall payment rates for interpreters?
- Does your court negotiate hourly rates for court interpretation? If so, when and why would the court typically negotiate with an interpreter on an offered rate?
- Describe strategies other than hourly rates used to incentivize interpreters to accept an assignment?
 - a. Probe: offering minimum hourly blocks, paying travel time and travel pay, accommodating scheduling to work with an interpreter's schedule, etc.
- Please share your thoughts on courts having a standardized pay rate across courts for contract court interpreters.
 - a. Probe: What are the pros and cons?
 - b. Probe: How do you suggest a standardized rate be determined?
 - c. Probe: What are your preferences around half-day/full-day rates or hourly rates? why?
 - d. Probe: How open is your court to adjusting the pay rate/minimum hours based on the recommendation from this study?
 - e. Probe: What are your thoughts regarding contracting per day instead of per assignment, such as the 'interpreter of the day' model where an interpreter is pre-scheduled for a specific day(s) of the week regardless of number of assignments. Probe: Are there alternative contracting types that your court would be interested in exploring? What are the suggestions?

Recruitment and Retention

- In your opinion, what strategies could be employed by local courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts to attract and retain more interpreters?
 - a. Probe: Please share any specific platforms, networks, or community groups
 - b. Probe: Please share how any of these efforts have worked in other states or industries

- c. Probe: How can outreach activities be incorporated into court initiatives to recruit new interpreters?

Wrapping Up

- What other information would you like to share about court interpretation in Washington?
- Are there any key changes or developments that would support your courts with court interpretation? Please describe.