

# COVID Interpreting Toolkit

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## Interpreting remote hearings

CLAS strongly recommends that interpreters use a headset or ear buds with a microphone (not the computer microphone) for all remote interpreting. Headset/ear buds often improves the audio quality for both listeners and the interpreter and leaves the interpreter’s hands free to take notes.

### *Consecutive remote interpreting*

How the interpreter connects to the hearing:

- If the LEP participant is in the courtroom and the interpreter is remote.
  - The interpreter remains available for the courtroom to call. If the court has not called by 15 minutes after the scheduled start time, contact the scheduler for instructions.
  - When the connection is established, the hearing is interpreted consecutively.
  - Please remind other participants to pause and give you time to interpret.
- The LEP participant and the interpreter are remote.
  - The interpreter is called by or calls into the audio/video conference (check your confirmation for instructions).
  - The LEP participant independently connects to the conference.
  - After the connection is made, the hearing is interpreted consecutively.
- If the interpreter is hired for a Telephonic Standby Block
  - The interpreter stays at home ready to answer the courtroom’s phone call.
  - When the courtroom is ready, they call the interpreter directly.
  - The court has exclusive access to that interpreter during the block.
  - The interpreter should expect to remain available for the entire Block.
  - If the court dismisses the interpreter before the scheduled end of the Block, the interpreter must contact the CLAS scheduler immediately. The scheduler can release the interpreter early if there is no further need for their services.

When the LEP participant speaks:

- Identify that the LEP participant is speaking then interpret.

Privileged communication:

- For privileged attorney client communication, the interpreter, the attorney and the LEP participant must all disconnect from the conference call. Then the interpreter calls the attorney's private phone, adds a call to the LEP participant's private phone and merges the calls. The consultation is interpreted consecutively through the 3-way call.
  - Note: If the interpreter has access to a 2<sup>nd</sup> phonenumber (via 2<sup>nd</sup> telephone or through a computer app), the interpreter can mute the conference call connection and establish the 3-way call through the 2<sup>nd</sup> phonenumber.
  - When the consultation is done, the interpreter, attorney and LEP participant rejoin the conference call.

OR

- The court instructs other participants to disconnect from the conference call, stops the FTR & clears the courtroom. The interpreter interprets consecutively through the conference call.
  - When the consultation is done, the conference call is reestablished and the FTR restarted.

### ***Simultaneous remote interpreting***

If an LEP person needs an interpreter to participate in a trial or longer hearing, the following techniques better support longer more involved matters (e.g. trials, CRB reviews) because they allow the interpreter to simultaneously interpret into the non-English language without being heard by other participants.

This type of connection requires more preparation and a complex setup and should be tested in advance of the hearing.

How the interpreter connects to the hearing:

- Use the **Voxolom equipment** (2 units in the Washington office, 1 unit in the Salem office, 1 unit in the Multnomah courthouse, 1 unit in the Umatilla courthouse)
- Use the **VRI equipment** (2 units in the Washington office)
- From the **interpreter's telephone** (see illustration):
  - The interpreter connects to the court conference call (line #1) then mutes that line (the English line).
  - Via a 2<sup>nd</sup> telephone or through a computer app (line #2), connects to the LEP participant's personal phone (the non-English line).
  - The interpreter must use separate earbuds for each line with the English line earbud and mic in one ear and the non-English earbud and mic in the other ear.
  - Keep the English line (#1) muted while simultaneously interpreting into the non-English language.

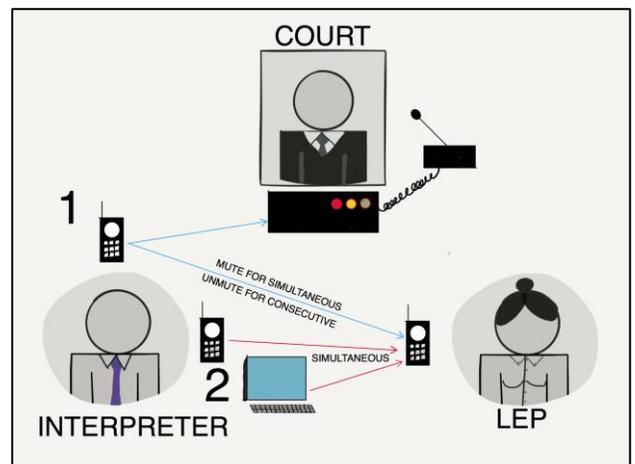


Illustration by Enrique Andrade

When the LEP participant speaks:

- **Voxolom or VRI:** follow equipment procedures
- From the **interpreter's telephone:**

- After hearing the non-English statement, the interpreter unmutes line #1 (the English line) and interprets into English for the court conference call.:
  - If the interpreter leaves the English line (#1) unmuted during the interaction, the LEP participant’s non-English statements and the English interpretation would both be audible on the court conference call and the interaction would be interpreted consecutively.

OR

- If the interpreter continues to appropriately mute and unmute the English line (#1), the English side of the interaction can be interpreted simultaneously but the non-English statements would not be audible on the court conference call.

Privileged communication:

- **Voxolom equipment, VRI and the interpreter’s telephone**

- The interpreter calls the attorney’s private phone on line #2, merges it to the non-English line and the interpretation is done consecutively,

OR

- The court instructs other participants to disconnect, stops the FTR & clears the courtroom and the consultation is interpreted consecutively through the conference call.
- When the consultation is done, other participants rejoin the conference call and the FTR restarted.
- This type of connection requires more complex setup and preparation

## Interpreting in-person hearings

While remote interpreting is the best way to avoid being exposed to the COVID, some matters must still be interpreted in-person. One way to reduce the spread of the outbreak is through social distancing.

If the court deems it necessary for you to provide your services in person, follow these general guidelines when going to the courtroom:

- Avoid using public transportation
- As far as practical, keep a safe distance from all parties (as of 3/27/2020—a minimum of six feet per the Chief Justice’s Order)
- Enter the courthouse only when needed and don’t congregate there. (consider staying in your car as an isolation base when you are on duty)
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Avoid touching shared court equipment such as notepads, pens, microphones, stands, lecterns, the “interpreter phone” for in custody defendants, etc.
- Consider wearing a cloth mask and gloves to prevent inadvertently infecting others. Learn how to safely put them on and take them off.

### *Consecutive interpreting in-person*

- Assess the environment you are going to interpret in. If you have concerns, make them known and ask the judge for help resolving them.
  - Position yourself in a safe location, as of 3/27/2020, that means a minimum of six feet away from others per the Chief Justice’s Order (e.g. in the jury box, in the gallery, several steps away from counsel table, behind the glass at a counter).

- Advise the judge that, for social distancing purposes, you will be using the consecutive mode.
- Make sure a courtroom microphone is near enough to pick up your voice for the FTR recording.
- Consecutive mode will also avoid having to use the same set of headphones on several LEP participants and having to disinfect them in between.

### ***Simultaneous interpreting in-person***

Some hearings may not be appropriate for remote interpretation. The Chief Justice’s order gives each Presiding Judge discretion to order that a trial, hearing or proceeding be conducted in-person if sufficient social distancing can be maintained and provides that the court can order reasonable precautions to protect the health of the participants, including victims, interpreters, and court staff.

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

- Interpreters should maintain appropriate social distancing from hearing participants and each other (as of 3/27/2020—a minimum of six feet per the Chief Justice’s Order);
- While CLAS owned interpreting equipment is still available to sign out, interpreters should consider bringing their own interpreting equipment to assignments. Consider:
  - Buying your own equipment, and
  - Buying extra microphone wind-guards/pop-filters.
- Disinfect the transmitter, microphone(s), receiver(s), headphone(s) and batteries before each use. Then wash hands.
- Do not share microphones.
  - Use one microphone for each member of the interpreting team.
  - When team members switch places, unplug the microphone and disinfect the transmitter before exchanging it.
- Disinfect each headphone and receiver set before giving it to an LEP user.
- If LEP users refuse to use headphones and receiver advise the court and ask for guidance.
- Avoid touching shared court equipment such as notepads, pens, microphones, stands, lecterns, etc.
- Disinfect the transmitter, microphone(s), receiver(s), headphone(s) and batteries after each use. Then wash hands.

### ***Privileged in-person communication***

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

- Some judges ask the party and their attorney to move to a separate area to allow for private communication with adequate spacing.
- Other judges order the courtroom cleared and the FTR turned off allowing the confidential communication to occur in the courtroom.