

Licensed Court Interpreters

Code of Ethics

Preamble. Many persons who come before the courts are non- or limited-English speakers. The function of court interpreters is to remove the language barrier to the extent possible, so that a non- or limited-English speaker's access to justice is the same as that of a similarly situated English speaker for whom no barrier exists. The degree of trust that is placed in court interpreters and the magnitude of their responsibility necessitate high, uniform ethical standards that will both guide and protect court interpreters in the course of their duties as well as uphold the standards of the profession as a whole. Interpreters are highly skilled professionals who fulfill an essential role in the administration of justice.

Applicability. This Code shall guide and be binding on all Licensed Court Interpreters licensed by the Judicial Branch Certification Commission (JBCC). Violation of this Code may subject a Licensed Court Interpreter to discipline by the JBCC. In this Code, "interpreters" refers to Licensed Court Interpreters. All other persons, agencies, and organizations who administer, supervise, use, or deliver interpreting services are encouraged to adopt this Code as a recommendation on best practices in Texas courts and legal settings.

1. *Accuracy and Completeness.* Interpreters must render a complete and accurate interpretation or sight translation, without omissions or embellishments. The register, style, and tone of the source language must be conserved. While interpreting, court interpreters are to use the same grammatical person as the speaker. Interpreter errors must be corrected for the record as soon as possible.
2. *Representation of Qualifications.* Interpreters must accurately and completely represent their certifications, accreditations, training, education, and pertinent experience.
3. *Impartiality and Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest.* Interpreters must be impartial and unbiased and must refrain from conduct that may give an appearance of bias. Interpreters must immediately disclose to the Court and all parties any real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest. An interpreter who is also an attorney must not serve in both capacities in the same matter.
4. *Professional Demeanor.* Interpreters must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the dignity of the Court and must be as unobtrusive as possible.
5. *Confidentiality.* Interpreters must not disclose privileged or confidential communications or information acquired in the course of interpreting or preparing for interpretation, unless authorized by the Court or by law.
6. *Scope of Practice.* Interpreters must limit themselves to interpreting and must not give legal advice, express personal opinions to individuals for whom they are interpreting, or engage in any other activities that may be construed to constitute a service other than interpreting while serving as an interpreter.

7. *Assessing and Reporting Impediments to Performance.* Interpreters must assess at all times their ability to deliver their services. Court interpreters must bring to the Court's attention any circumstances or conditions that impede full compliance with any canon of this Code, including, but not limited to: interpreter fatigue, inability to hear, or inadequate knowledge of specialized terminology, and must decline assignments under conditions that make such compliance unattainable. When interpreters have any reservation about their ability to satisfy an assignment competently, they must immediately convey that reservation to the Court.
8. *Duty to Report Ethical Violations.* Interpreters must report to the Court any effort to influence or impede the performance of their duty; their compliance with any legal requirement, including any provision of this Code; or any other official policy governing court interpreting. An interpreter having knowledge that another interpreter has committed a violation of any provision of this Code must inform the Court and the JBCC.
9. *Professional Development.* Interpreters must continually improve their skills and knowledge and advance the profession through activities such as professional training, education, and interaction with colleagues and specialists in related fields. Interpreters must keep informed of all statutes, rules of courts, and policies of the judicial system that relate to the performance of their professional duties.