



ILLINOIS JUDICIAL BRANCH

Bench Card: Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) for Spoken Languages

December 2025 v.1

What is Video Remote Interpreting?

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is a real-time interpreting service that uses video conferencing to connect foreign language interpreters with people needing language assistance, no matter where they are.

Why use VRI?

VRI expands access to certified or qualified interpreters by connecting courts with interpreters state and nationwide. It ensures timely, high-quality language services, especially in rural areas or in emergencies when an in-person interpreter isn't available. This flexibility also helps reduce delays.

Best Practices for VRI

- Test technology, if time allows, as poor audio or visual quality can impair communication and comprehension.
- Make sure the environment where VRI is used is quiet, well-lit, and free from distractions.
- Confirm the language and dialect in advance to assign the correct interpreter. For less common languages or dialects, plan ahead to avoid delays.
- When possible, give the interpreter a brief case overview to familiarize them with terminology, and context, which improves interpretation quality.
- When using VRI, courts should make sure that limited English proficient (LEP) participants have a private and confidential way to speak with their attorneys or advocates.
- Have a backup plan, like telephonic interpreting or IT support, to keep proceedings moving if technical issues occur.

When VRI may be appropriate

- Initial appearances or arraignments.
- Remote or hybrid appearances.
- Routine or simple hearings or events without complex testimony or multiple witnesses.
- When an on-site interpreter isn't available, especially for rare languages, urgent situations, or in rural or under-resourced areas.
- Court proceedings not anticipated to last more than 45 minutes, otherwise schedule 2 interpreters.

When VRI may not be appropriate

- Full trials or hearings involving witness testimony.
- Mental health evaluations or competency hearings.
- High-emotion cases (e.g., contested domestic violence or juvenile matters).
- LEP individuals with hearing, visual, or cognitive impairments.

Note: While these situations generally call for in-person interpreting, there may be circumstances where VRI can still be used effectively depending on the case and the needs of the parties involved.

Tips for Judges and Court Staff

- Avoid crosstalk. Only one person should speak at a time.
- Pause frequently to allow interpretation.
- Allow extra time for interpretation. The remote format can add slight delays, so avoid rushing the exchange.
- If there's a lag or delay, repeat the last sentence for clarity.
- Keep interpreter fatigue in mind and either institute regular breaks every 20 minutes or consider [team interpreting](#).
- Watch for nonverbal cues that the LEP person is confused or disengaged.

Scan this QR Code or visit
ilcourts.info/language-access



For additional assistance, please contact:

Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts
Access to Justice Division
AccessToJustice@illinoiscourts.gov

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT COMMISSION



Consecutive Interpreting

- In consecutive interpreting, the interpreter listens first, then interprets after the speaker pauses.
- The interpreter will interpret everything said in the courtroom to the LEP party,
- To ensure accurate interpretation, the court and all parties should avoid long statements and pause regularly to allow the interpreter time to interpret.

Simultaneous Interpreting

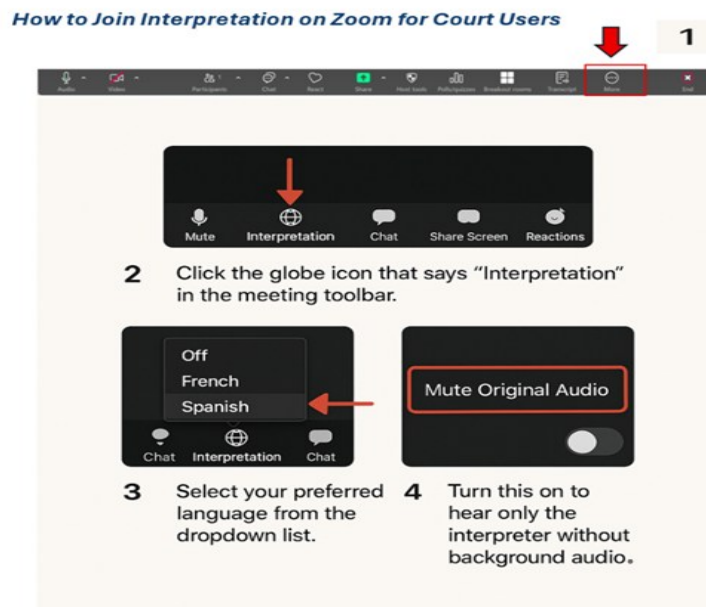
- In simultaneous interpreting, the interpreter listens and interprets at the same time as the speaker is talking.
- The interpreter will provide real-time interpretation of everything being said in the courtroom to the LEP party.
- The court and all parties may speak naturally without pausing but should avoid talking over one another or speaking too quickly to ensure clear interpretation.

Scheduling a Zoom Meeting with Simultaneous Interpretation

To enable simultaneous interpretation in your Zoom meeting:

1. Log in to your Zoom account (must be a business account) and go to Schedule a Meeting.
2. **Scroll down to Interpretation** and check the box that says **Enable language interpretation**.
3. **Add your interpreters** by entering their email addresses and selecting the languages they will interpret.
 - You can assign interpreters while scheduling or add/select them **later during the meeting** using the Interpretation panel.
 - Zoom will assign them the Interpreter role once the meeting starts.
4. Inform interpreters and participants in advance which **language channels** will be available.
5. Once the meeting starts, click **Interpretation** in the toolbar to **start the interpretation feature**.

Note: Participants will see a globe icon and can choose their preferred language channel. Interpreters will hear the original audio and speak only in their assigned language. More information can be found [here](#).



Additional resources:

[Illinois Supreme Court Policy on Remote Court Appearances](#)

[National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\) VRI school](#)

[Using Language Interpretation in your meeting or webinar](#)