

Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Court Interpreter Orientation and Testing Announcement

2026 SAVE-THE-DATE

PART 1: ORIENTATION

To be placed on the AOIC Court Interpreter Registry, candidates must attend a two-day orientation. This orientation is open to anyone at least 18 years of age with native-like proficiency in English and a second language. It covers the interpreter's role and professional ethics, modes of interpreting used in court, legal terminology, and court protocol.

Candidates may decide whether they'd like to take the written exam before or after the two-day orientation. Self-study is encouraged before taking the written and oral exams to reinforce and expand on what was covered in the orientation.

Sign language and deaf interpreters are only required to attend orientation and will not be tested by the AOIC. Candidates must submit proof of Advanced or Master's level licensure with the IDHHC to attend orientation.

Orientation Fee: \$200

Orientation Dates Offered via Zoom:

TBD

Online via Zoom, held on two Saturdays, must attend both days.

TBD

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PART 2: WRITTEN EXAM

The written examination is specifically for foreign language interpreters and may be taken either before or after the two-day orientation. Candidates can decide which step they prefer to complete first, allowing them to either attend the orientation initially or start with the written exam.

Written Exam Fee: \$50

Written Exam Dates Offered in Chicago:

January 12th
February 9th
March 9th
April 6th
May 11th
June 8th
July 13th
August 10th
September 14th
October 5th
November 9th
December 7th

Registration and payment deadline: The Friday before each written exam.

OPTIONAL SKILL BUILDING COURSE

If you pass the written exam, the AOIC offers subsidized skill-building courses for those preparing for the oral exam or OPI.

TBD

PART 3: ORAL EXAM or OPI

Candidates who have attended the two-day orientation and passed the written test may take the NCSC oral exam testing their skills in sight translation, consecutive, and simultaneous interpreting. The exam is offered in 22 languages. Candidates must pass with 70% or higher to be listed on the AOIC Court Interpreter Registry as "Certified." Candidates must pass with a 60% or higher to be listed as "Registered."

If you speak a language that is not offered by the NCSC oral exam, you may be able to take an oral proficiency interview (OPI), if available in your language. You must receive a score of 10 or higher score to be listed as "Qualified."

Oral Exam Fee:
\$225 (in-state)
\$300 (out of state)

Oral Exam Dates Offered in Chicago:

February 6th, 2026

Registration and payment deadline: January 1st

July 10th, 2026

Registration and payment deadline: June 1st

July 17th, 2026

Registration and payment deadline: June 1st

November 6th, 2026

Registration and payment deadline: October 1st

OPI Fee: \$130 for all languages

OPI Exam:

Please contact nalawawda@illinoiscourts.gov to schedule the OPI exam. You must contact the AOIC two weeks in advance.

REGISTRATION OPEN: Please visit the AOIC website to register: <https://courtapps.illinoiscourts.gov/>

Do you have the skills necessary to be a certified court interpreter?

1. Possess educated, native-like mastery of both English and a second language;
2. Display wide general knowledge, typical of what a minimum of two years of general education at a college or university would provide; and
3. Perform the three major types of court interpreting: sight, consecutive and simultaneous.

If numbers 1 & 2 describe you, and you are willing to develop the skills for number 3, court interpreting may be for you.

Certification Process

As of 01/01/2025, First Step –
Choose to take the written
Exam or Orientation, but
MUST complete both

Pass Written Exam at 80%

Attend Orientation

Pass oral exam at 60% to
be "registered." Pass oral
exam at 70% to be
"certified."

Pass oral proficiency
interview with highest
score to be "qualified."

What materials are used for training and testing?

Illinois belongs to the Council of Language Access Coordinators through the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). Our program is based on their model and uses their recommended practices and exams.

Will the AOIC offer reciprocity?

Yes, Illinois accepts completion of most states' orientation and proof of NCSC exam scores, and proof of federal certification. If all other certification requirements are met, such candidates will be listed on the Registry. Sign language and deaf interpreters must attend the two-day orientation and submit proof of Advanced or Master's level licensure with the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission to be listed on the Registry. Sign language and deaf interpreters are not tested by the AOIC.

Do I have to go through all three phases if I teach language, already interpret, and took several years of language training?

Yes, everyone working toward certification must participate in all three phases.

How much work is there?

It varies by where you are located, where you are willing to travel and your language set. The need for interpreters across the state is high, but funding to hire interpreters varies by county. As an independent contractor, the circuit county courts contact interpreters on an "as needed" basis.

REGISTRATION OPEN

To find out more information and to register, visit <https://www.illinoiscourts.gov/public/find-a-language-interpreter/> or contact Noor Alawawda, AOIC Senior Program Manager, Language Access, at 217-208-3327 or nalawawda@illinoiscourts.gov.