



**FROM THE COMMITTEE  
ON MODEL CRIMINAL  
JURY INSTRUCTIONS**

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The Committee on Model Criminal Jury Instructions has adopted the following new model criminal jury instruction, M Crim JI 5.15 (interpreter), to be used whenever an interpreter is used in the courtroom to translate for a defendant or witness. The instruction is effective June 1, 2021.

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**[NEW] M Crim JI 5.15 Interpreter**

This court seeks a fair trial for everyone, regardless of the language they speak or how well it is spoken [, including those who communicate through sign language]<sup>1</sup>. An interpreter will be assisting the court during these proceedings.

Please keep in mind that a person might speak some English without speaking it fluently. That person has the right to the services of an interpreter, too. Therefore, you may not give greater or lesser weight to a person’s interpreted testimony based on your conclusions, if any, regarding the extent to which that person speaks English.

The interpreter is not associated with any party, and [his / her] only function is to provide unbiased assistance in helping [the defendant / a witness] to communicate effectively in court during the trial and to understand the proceedings.

[The interpreter will not be asked questions or give answers, but will only interpret them. (He / she) may speak in the first person using words such as “I,” “me,” or “mine,” but that is only to ensure that the court record accurately reflects what was said by (the defendant / a witness).]<sup>2</sup>

Bias against or for persons who [are not proficient in English / are hearing impaired] is not allowed. Do not allow the fact that the court is using an interpreter to help [the defendant / a witness] to influence how you decide the facts or the case in any way.

[Some of you may know (sign language / the non-English language being spoken). If you have a question about the accuracy of the translation of a witness’s

testimony, you may bring this matter to my attention by raising your hand. You should not ask your question or make any comment about the translation in the presence of the other jurors, or otherwise share your question or concern with any of them. I will take steps to see whether your question can be answered and any discrepancy resolved. If, however, after such efforts a discrepancy remains in your mind, you must rely on the interpreter's translation.]<sup>2</sup>

*Use Note*

1. Read only where sign language is being interpreted.
2. These bracketed sections are only necessary if the interpreter is being used for a witness (including the defendant).