



MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), who are involved in court proceedings, have access to interpreters in multiple languages; all trial courts have designated coordinators to meet the needs of those with limited English.

LANSING, MI. September 11, 2015 –Two very busy years after the Michigan Supreme Court implemented court rules on September 11, 2013 to ensure those with limited English skills have meaningful access to certified or qualified court-appointed language interpreters, all trial courts have a designated language access coordinator and plans to address the needs of residents in their communities.

“The court rule announced two years ago today established consistency for trial courts and is safeguarding access for all persons who have limited proficiency in speaking English,” said Justice Bridget M. McCormack. “Our goal is to ensure that the people we rely on to interpret what is being said in court have the skills and experience to provide accurate interpretation of all proceedings and for witnesses or others who require a translator to participate meaningfully in court proceedings,” she added.

Justice McCormack also expressed appreciation for the time and hard work offered by the members of the LEP Implementation Advisory Committee. “Their practical perspective and carefully considered suggestions have been of great value in ensuring that LEP individuals have meaningful access to the courts.”

According to U.S. census records almost 850,000 or 9.1 percent of Michigan’s population speak a language other than English as their first language. Of that number, about 320,000 people speak English “not well,” based on self-identifying responses from Michigan residents in census data. The number of interpreters available to this group has grown to 167 and 21 firms since testing and certification of people interested in becoming non-English-language court interpreters was launched.

Other key steps taken over the past two years include:

- Two court rules were adopted and implemented [MCR 1.111](#) and [MCR 8.127](#).
- MSC Administrative Order [2013-8](#) was adopted and implemented.
- Judges, court administrators, referees, magistrates, and probation officers have participated in more than 40 presentations about meeting the needs of their respective residents.

- A [manual](#) and [code of conduct](#) for all interpreters has been approved along with a summary of [Michigan Court Rule 1.111](#) to assist court personnel. Interpreters must attest to following the code of conduct and court rules and are required to report continuing education hours.
- A [bench guide for judges](#) was approved and distributed, and foreign language presentations are scheduled as part of the fall 2015 regional meetings.
- A list of [potential voir dire questions](#) for interpreters was developed.
- The [Court's website](#) is consistently updated with language access resources and information.

A Foreign Language Board of Review, with members who serve staggered three-year terms, established criteria for certification of interpreters. The board also makes recommendations regarding an interpreter professional code of conduct and certification requirements for individuals and companies; SCAO does not hire interpreters, but tests and certifies individuals to interpret for trial courts.

Tests can be offered in these languages: Arabic, Cantonese, French, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Ilocano, Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. [MCR 8.127](#) requires annual registration of all interpreters and interpreter firms.

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