

Establishing an interpreter's qualifications on the record

The court must establish an interpreter's qualifications as an **expert witness**. Wis. Stats. §906.04.

A “**qualified interpreter**” is able to do all of the following. §885.38(1)(c):

- Readily communicate with a person who has limited English proficiency.
- Orally transfer the meaning of statements to and from English and the language used by the person in the context of a court proceeding.
- Readily and accurately interpret
 - without omissions or additions;
 - conserving the meaning, tone, and style of the original statement;
 - including dialect, slang, and specialized vocabulary.

Suggested questions to establish an interpreter's qualifications:

1. Are you certified as a court interpreter by this state or any other state or federal court? Do you have any other accreditation for interpretation or translation?
2. What is your native language? How did you learn English/ the other language? Are you listed on the Director of State Courts' Roster of Interpreters?
3. Describe your formal schooling.
4. Do you have any formal training in interpreting? In legal or court interpreting?
5. Please describe your experience as an interpreter. Have you ever interpreted in court before? What kind of proceedings?
6. Have you spoken with the person? Do you need a few minutes to talk? Does the person speak a specific dialect? Are you able to communicate with him or her?
7. Do you know any of the parties, witnesses, or attorneys? Are you aware of any conflict of interest that you might have in this case?
8. Have you read the Code of Ethics for Court Interpreters in the Wisconsin Courts? Do you understand it and agree to abide by it?
9. Describe what it means to interpret simultaneously and consecutively. Are you able to do so? Do you understand that you must interpret everything said on the record?
10. Do you need time to review any documents in this case?

Upon qualification as an expert witness, the court must administer an **oath** or affirmation that the interpreter will make a true translation. §906.04. The Committee to Improve Interpretation and Translation in the Wisconsin Courts recommends this oath:

- “Do you solemnly swear (affirm) that you will interpret truly, accurately, completely, and impartially?”