



## Iowa Judicial Branch

### Administrative Directive of the State Court Administrator, 2023–01

#### Policies on Court Interpreter and Translator Compensation

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**Authority, applicability, and effective date.** Pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 47.12(2), the Iowa State Court Administrator hereby establishes the following statewide policies for the compensation of court interpreters and translators. This administrative directive applies to oral and sign language interpreters and translators of court-related materials who will be paid by a government entity for services provided to limited English proficient (LEP) persons who are participants in judicial branch legal proceedings and predisposition court-ordered programs as defined in Iowa Court Rule 47.1. This administrative directive replaces directive 2021-07 amended March 4, 2022, and applies to interpreter and translator services provided on January 1, 2023, and thereafter.

#### **A. Standard hourly fees for court interpreters.**

A court interpreter shall receive the following hourly fee based on the classification of court interpreters established in Iowa Court Rules:

1. *Oral language interpreters:* Classifications defined in Iowa Court Rule 47.4:
  - a. Class A (certified): **\$58**
  - b. Class B (noncertified): **\$46**
  - c. Class C (noncertified / on Iowa's roster of court interpreters or on another state's list of approved court interpreters): **\$40**
  - d. Unclassified (noncertified / not on any state's approved list of court interpreters, but meets minimum qualifications in Iowa Court Rule 47.2): **\$25**
2. *Sign language interpreters:* Classifications defined in Iowa Court Rule 47.5:
  - a. Class A (certified – specialist certificate: legal): **\$82**
  - b. Class B (noncertified): **\$55**
3. *Telephone or remote video interpreters:* The standard fees for interpreters provided by the primary telephone interpreter services (e.g., CTS Language Link or Language Line, Inc.) will be established in an agreement with the state court administrator. Fees paid to other telephone or remote video interpreter services must be approved in a manner consistent with section B. (below) on exceptions to the standard hourly fees.

#### **B. Exceptions to the standard hourly fees for court interpreters.**

1. An interpreter will not be granted a fee that exceeds the hourly fee in section A (above) unless the judicial branch determines a higher fee is necessary under the circumstances to obtain the services of an interpreter who is appropriately qualified pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 47.3(4)-(6), but the higher hourly fee may not exceed the following limits:
  - a. **\$60** per hour for a noncertified oral language interpreter.

- b. **\$70** per hour for a Class A certified oral language interpreter.
- c. **\$85** per hour for a Class A certified sign language interpreter.
- 2. An exception to the fee limits established in B.1 may be granted only by SCA or the SCA's designee (hereafter, SCA) before a court appoints an interpreter. SCA will grant an exception only in extraordinary circumstances, which include:
  - a. The language of the person who needs an interpreter is uncommon in Iowa and a regional or national search is necessary to obtain the services of a qualified interpreter;
  - b. A diligent search for a qualified interpreter has found the interpreter to be the most qualified and geographically closest interpreter available; and
  - c. Paying a fee that exceeds the fee in B.1 would cost less than employing the next geographically closest and comparably qualified interpreter.

If SCA approves an exceptional fee, the approval must be in writing and delivered to the district court administrator (hereafter, DCA) by email. The DCA will inform the court regarding approval of a higher hourly fee, and the court will include the approved fee in the order appointing the interpreter.

#### **C. Fees for translators of court-related materials.**

1. *Standard fee for written translation of documents:*
  - a. Upon approval by the court of an application for a written translation of a court-related document pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 47.13(6), the court will direct DCA personnel to locate a translator who meets the qualifications in Iowa Court Rule 47.13(3). A qualified translator may be paid a fee of up to **\$ .18** per word in the source document, and the fee will be included in the order appointing the translator.
  - b. When searching for a qualified translator consistent with Iowa Court Rule 47.13(3), court personnel will give preference to certified translators/interpreters who are on Iowa's Roster of Court Interpreters, but will conduct a regional or national search, if necessary, to locate a qualified translator who will provide services for the standard fee in this directive.
2. *Exceptions to the standard fee for translation of documents:*
  - a. If an application for a written translation of a court-related **document** has been filed and court personnel are unable to locate a qualified translator who will provide a written translation of a court-related document for the standard fee allowed by section C.1, the DCA or DCA's designee will submit a request for assistance via email to the SCA's office. The request will include a copy of the document to be translated, a copy of the Application for Approval of a Written Translation and Appointment of a Translator, and the date the translation should be delivered to the court.
  - b. SCA will locate a qualified translator and provide the court the name of a qualified translator and the fee to be paid to the translator. The court will include that information in the Order Approving a Written Translation of Court-related Material and Appointing a Translator.

3. *Fee for a written translation of an **audio or audio-video recording** of communications involving at least one LEP person:*
  - a. Upon approval of an application for a written translation of an audio or video recording of communications involving at least one LEP person, pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 47.13(6) the court will direct DCA personnel to locate at least two translators who meet the qualifications in Iowa Court Rule 47.13(3). DCA personnel will solicit the translators' cost estimates for providing the requested written translation. DCA personnel will conduct a regional or national search, if necessary, to locate qualified translators.
  - b. After obtaining cost estimates from at least two qualified translators, DCA personnel will contact the SCA's office to review the estimates and determine whether to solicit additional estimates.
  - c. After completing a review of translation cost described in sections C.3(a)-(b), the SCA's office will select the translator who submitted the lowest cost estimate and email the name of the translator and the cost estimate to the DCA staff member, who will complete a proposed order approving the written translation and appointing the translator.
  - d. The fee approved in the court order will be the *maximum fee payable* to the translator unless the translator establishes good cause for obtaining a higher fee upon completion of the translation work.
4. *Minimum translation fee:* For a written translation of a document or a group of documents related to a single case or party, a translator will receive a fee of not less than \$20 if the court approves the written translation pursuant to Iowa Court Rule 47.13.

**D. Compensation of interpreter services agencies.** An interpreter services agency will be paid the standard fee for the interpreter's classification in section A. An exception may be granted for good cause by SCA in writing prior to the proceeding.

**E. Definition of contractual terms.** The following definitions will apply in the absence of a written agreement or court order that specifically identifies or defines other terms or conditions for the provision of court interpreting services:

1. "Contracted time" is the amount of time that a court interpreter agrees to provide interpreting services. It includes the start and estimated finish times for the court proceeding identified by a court employee, a representative of the entity that will pay the interpreter, or the applicable court order. If a proceeding for which an interpreter has contracted to provide services is cancelled less than 24 hours before it is scheduled to begin, the interpreter will be paid according to the terms in section N.2. If an interpreted proceeding begins, but ends earlier than the contracted time, the interpreter will be paid according to section N.3.
2. A "trial day" or a "full day" will be seven hours. It begins at 8:30 AM, ends at 4:30 PM, and excludes one hour for lunch; other breaks will be paid time. If the lunch period exceeds one hour, the interpreter will be paid for the extra lunch time as "waiting time." If the court proceeding actually begins before 8:30 AM or extends beyond 4:30 PM, or an LEP party or that party's attorney requests interpreter services before a court

proceeding begins, after it ends, or during the lunch break, the interpreter will be paid for the additional work time.

3. "All morning" will be 3.5 hours (including break time), from 8:30 AM to 12:00 PM, unless the morning session actually begins earlier or ends later than these times. An interpreter will be paid for break time.
4. "All afternoon" will be 3.5 hours (including break time), from 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM, unless the afternoon session actually begins earlier or ends later than these times.
5. A "half day" will be 3.5 hours (including break time), consistent with the definitions of an "all morning" and an "all afternoon" (above).

**F. Minimum interpreting time.**

1. When a court appoints an interpreter to provide services for court proceedings, the interpreter will be paid a minimum of 90 minutes for each morning and 90 minutes for each afternoon, not a minimum of 90 minutes for each interpreted proceeding in a morning or afternoon.
2. If an interpreter provides services for participants involved in more than one case during a morning or afternoon and the total actual work time is less than the minimum time in section F.1, the interpreter will apportion the minimum time among the cases when submitting claims for compensation.
3. Total time claimed may not exceed the 90 minutes minimum time if the actual work time was 90 minutes or less during a morning or afternoon.
4. An exception to the 90 minutes minimum fee must be approved by SCA in writing and delivered to the DCA prior to the interpreted event, and the longer minimum fee must be included in the court order appointing the interpreter. SCA will approve an exception to the 90 minutes minimum fee only in extraordinary circumstances identified in B.2(a)-(b) and if paying a higher minimum fee would cost less than employing the next geographically closest and comparably qualified interpreter.
5. When a court appoints an interpreter to provide services in a case, and the interpreter agrees to assist an attorney during communications with an LEP party at a location outside of court in preparation for a court proceeding, the interpreter will be paid a minimum of 90 minutes for each morning of interpreting for the same attorney and 90 minutes for each afternoon of interpreting for the same attorney, whether the interpreter provides those services by telephone or in-person.

**G. Waiting and preparation time.**

1. If a court schedules an interpreter to provide services at a court proceeding and the interpreter appears at the court facility at the scheduled time, the waiting time between the scheduled and the actual starting times is reimbursable. When submitting a fee claim, an interpreter will apportion waiting time among all the clients or cases for which the interpreter provides services during a given session.
2. When more than one interpreter has provided services during a jury trial involving at least one LEP party, only one interpreter at a time will be paid for time beyond contracted time to wait for and interpret the jury's verdict. If the interpreters do not agree which interpreter will wait for the jury's verdict, the judge will select one.

3. An interpreter will not be compensated for time spent reviewing case-related documents in preparation for a court or legal proceeding unless:
  - a. The court approves such review in the order appointing the court interpreter; or
  - b. The interpreter is appointed to serve as an expert witness regarding the accuracy of a recorded interpretation or a written translation of court-related material produced by another interpreter or translator.

#### H. Reimbursable travel time.

1. When a court interpreter must travel to a county outside the interpreter's county of residence to provide services, round-trip travel time between a court interpreter's residence and the court or other location where the interpreter provides services will be paid at the same hourly rate as for their interpreting services, however not to exceed \$70 per hour for oral language interpreters.
  2. Calculation of travel time will be as follows: The total round-trip travel miles, as determined by Google Maps, between the interpreter's residence and the courthouse or location where the interpreted activity occurs, divided by 55 (miles per hour). Additional travel time may be granted only if the interpreter encountered weather-related road conditions (e.g., ice or snow) of such severity that it necessarily extended the travel time.
  3. If a proceeding will be conducted on more than one day and an interpreter's residence is outside the county where the proceeding is located, the judicial branch will determine whether it is less expensive to pay the interpreter for round-trip travel time or for overnight lodging and meals at state rates (see [Attachment 1](#)) for the evenings before and between the days of the proceeding. The interpreter will be reimbursed an amount equal to the less expensive option regardless of which option the interpreter chooses.
    - a. **Note:** Iowa law\* specifies that a public employer (which includes the judicial branch) and public employee shall not use public funds to procure lodging from a lodging provider that is not certified as having completed human trafficking prevention training. Contracted interpreters are not public employees, and the judicial branch does not use public funds to procure lodging for interpreters, but the judicial branch strongly encourages independent contract interpreters who need overnight lodging to procure any necessary lodging services from providers that are certified as having completed human trafficking prevention training. Certified providers are identified at the following website: <https://stopthiowa.org/certified-locations>.
- \*See Iowa Code subsection 80.45A(5)(C)*
4. When submitting a fee claim, an interpreter will apportion reimbursable travel time among all the cases for which the interpreter provided services at the location to which the interpreter travelled.
  5. When there is no difference in the classifications of interpreters under Court Rule 47.3(4)-(5), an interpreter who resides within the county should be appointed before an interpreter who resides outside the county.

**I. Travel expenses: mileage, lodging, meals, and airline or other public transportation.**

1. When payment of travel expenses, in addition to travel time, is necessary to obtain the services of a qualified interpreter for a court proceeding, the DCA or the DCA's designee will negotiate with the interpreter or interpreter services agency to reasonably limit these expenses consistent with the compensation terms in this administrative directive.
2. Reimbursement of travel expenses will be up to state-approved rates in [Attachment 1](#) unless SCA approves an exception to a state-approved rate in the order appointing the court interpreter.
3. When the closest qualified interpreter resides in a location where airline transportation is the least expensive travel option, but the interpreter expresses a preference for driving, the DCA or DCA's designee will estimate the costs of travel by airline (including travel to and from the airports at both locations, parking fees, and payment for travel time) and by automobile (including payment for travel time) and will offer to reimburse the interpreter an amount equal to the less expensive option, regardless of which travel option the interpreter chooses. The court will include the agreed upon terms in the order appointing the court interpreter.
4. Reimbursement for travel expenses must be approved by a judge in the order appointing the interpreter before an interpreter incurs such expenses.
5. Meal expenses will be reimbursed at state rates (see [Attachment 1](#)) only when overnight lodging has been approved in the order appointing the interpreter prior to the proceeding. Hotel receipts are required, but meal receipts are not required.
6. Reimbursement for travel mileage may be approved in writing by SCA only in extraordinary circumstances identified in B2. If approved by SCA, the per mile reimbursement rate for contractors is the same as the standard mileage rate for in-state travel reimbursement for state employees. The rate can be found at: <https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/manuals-forms-references/reference-materials>.
7. An interpreter or interpreter services agency will submit a copy of the order appointing the interpreter that includes approval of travel expenses with the interpreter's fee claim form to obtain reimbursement.
8. If a proceeding unexpectedly extends to an additional day and the interpreter resides more than 100 miles from the location of the proceeding, an interpreter may be reimbursed for lodging plus dinner and breakfast at state rates without prior written approval by the court.
  - a. **Note:** The judicial branch strongly encourages independent contract interpreters who need overnight lodging to procure any necessary lodging services from providers that are certified as having completed human trafficking prevention training. Please see note at item (H)(3)(a) on Page 5.
9. At the end of an interpreted proceeding, if an interpreter would normally travel back to the interpreter's residence, but severe weather makes such travel hazardous (e.g., due to ice or heavy snow), an interpreter may be reimbursed for lodging and meals without prior written approval by the judicial branch.

- J. Avoidable travel expenses.** Any travel expenses incurred by an interpreter after receiving notice of a cancellation of a court proceeding at which the interpreter was supposed to provide services will not be reimbursed.
- K. Unavoidable travel expenses.**
1. If an interpreter purchases nonrefundable transportation tickets (airline, train, or bus) after receiving approval in advance from the DCA and the proceeding for which the interpreter was needed is cancelled and the interpreter is notified of the cancellation at least 24 hours before the scheduled departure time, the interpreter will be reimbursed for the cost incurred by the interpreter for cancelling the tickets (e.g., the ticket change fee charged by most airlines).
  2. If notice of a cancellation is delivered to an interpreter after the interpreter has travelled at least part of the distance to the location where services are to be provided, and that location is outside the interpreter's county of residence, actual travel time (not expected travel time) and other previously approved travel expenses actually incurred are reimbursable.
- L. Parking costs.** If a proceeding is conducted in a location where an interpreter must pay for parking, actual parking costs are reimbursable up to \$8 per day without a receipt, and up to \$15 per day with a receipt.
- M. Notice of cancellation of agreement.**
1. A court interpreter receives notice of a cancellation when a court employee, attorney representing the person who needs the interpreter, or employee of the office that will pay the interpreter delivers notice of a cancellation to the interpreter by email to the email address provided by the court interpreter, or by voice or fax message at a phone number provided by the court interpreter, or through verbal communication with a representative of the court interpreter at a phone number provided by the court interpreter, not only when the court interpreter actually hears or reads the message.
  2. Iowa Court Rule 47.3(13) establishes an interpreter's obligations when an interpreter is unable to provide interpreting services for a court proceeding for which the interpreter previously agreed to provide services.
- N. Payment of a court interpreter upon cancellation of agreement.**
1. If an interpreter agrees to provide services for a court proceeding, and the interpreter receives notice of cancellation of the court proceeding(s) pursuant to section M at least 24 hours prior to the time the court interpreter is scheduled to begin providing services (excluding weekends and holidays), the court interpreter will not receive payment for cancelled interpreting time or cancelled travel time.
  2. If an interpreter receives notice of cancellation of a court proceeding less than 24 hours prior to the time the court interpreter is scheduled to begin providing services in court, the court interpreter will receive either the full hourly rate for the contracted interpreting time or for seven hours, whichever is less, plus any actual reimbursable travel time incurred and any previously approved nonrefundable travel expenses incurred prior to receiving notice of the cancellation. An interpreter will not receive

compensation for expected travel time that was not actually incurred prior to the notice of the cancellation.

3. If notice of cancellation of a court proceeding is provided to an interpreter after the interpreter begins providing services for the proceeding, but before the contracted time period has been completed (e.g., due to settlement or guilty plea), the court interpreter will be paid for actual interpreting time plus either the remaining contracted interpreting time or seven hours of interpreting time (after the cancellation), whichever is less, plus reimbursable round-trip travel time if applicable. The interpreter also will be reimbursed for any previously approved travel expenses (see section I) incurred prior to receiving notice of the cancellation. For assignments that are scheduled for three or more days (e.g., trials), the court interpreter will be paid for actual interpreting time plus either the remaining contracted interpreting time or 14 hours of interpreting time (after the cancellation), whichever is less, plus reimbursable round-trip travel time if applicable.
4. If a court interpreter, after receiving notice of a cancellation pursuant to section N.2 or N.3, is able to obtain alternate employment as an interpreter to substitute for part or all the cancelled court interpreting time, the court interpreter will subtract the amount of fees earned through the alternate interpreting work from the amount owed to the interpreter for the cancelled court interpreting time. If a cancellation described in section N.3 occurs, travel time returning to an interpreter's residence will not be considered alternate interpreting work time.

**O. Managing the number of court interpreters and interpreter costs.** See Iowa Court Rules 47.3(12)(e) and (f).

**P. Fee claims for court interpreter or translator services.**

1. Except as provided in section P.2 (below), an interpreter or translator is highly encouraged to submit a copy of the interpreter's or translator's fee itemization form to the clerk of court in the county where the case was located **as soon as possible** after completing the assignment or translation service, but no later than **30 days** after. The clerk of court will then provide the interpreter or translator with a file-stamped copy of their fee itemization form and a copy of a court order approving the fee claim. The interpreter must then submit the file-stamped copy and order to the state court administration's finance office or to the county auditor (if applicable) within **45 days** after completing services. The fee itemization forms and instructions for submitting fee claims can be found in the court interpreters' section of the Iowa courts' website at: <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-interpreters/info-for-current-interpreters/>
2. For services provided between June 15 and June 30 each year, an interpreter must submit the file-stamped copy and order to SCA Finance or to the county auditor (if applicable) by July 30 of that year.
3. The date the office responsible for paying an interpreter receives a file-stamped copy of the fee itemization form and a copy of a judge's order approving the fee claim from an interpreter is the date the fee claim form is "submitted" for the purpose of meeting the 45-day time limit in section P.1.



4. Exceptions to the 45-day rule in P.1 will be granted only if the delay in submitting a fee claim was caused by one of the following circumstances:
  - a. Death of the interpreter.
  - b. Death of the interpreter's spouse, child, parent, or sibling.
  - c. Serious illness, injury, or other medical condition experienced by the interpreter that prevents the interpreter from working for more than three consecutive days within the last five days before the expiration of the 45-day period for submission of the fee claim.
  - d. Serious illness, injury, or other medical condition experienced by the interpreter's spouse or child that prevents the spouse or child from working or performing other regular daily activities for more than three consecutive days within the last five days before the expiration of the 45-day period for submission of the fee claim.
  - e. The government office responsible for paying the interpreter, in its sole discretion, may grant an exception when an interpreter provides substantial and convincing evidence that some other extraordinary condition(s) beyond the interpreter's control prevented the interpreter from submitting a fee claim with the 45-day time period.
  - f. A fee claim submitted pursuant to the exception in section P.4(a) must be submitted within 90 days after the death of the interpreter. A fee claim submitted pursuant to the exception in section P.4(b) must be submitted within 60 days after the death that caused the delay. A fee claim submitted pursuant to the exception in sections P.4(c), (d), or (e) must be submitted within 60 days after the occurrence of the serious illness, injury, other medical condition, or other extraordinary circumstance that caused the delay.
5. When SCA is responsible for paying a court interpreter, SCA personnel who manage interpreter fee claims may reduce or modify the amount of a payment to an interpreter (claimant) whom SCA is required to pay, even if a judge has approved the interpreter's fee claim, if:
  - a. The claimant incorrectly calculated the fees or expenses;
  - b. This administrative directive or the Iowa Court Rules do not authorize reimbursement of the claimant for the type of expense(s) claimed;
  - c. The claimant failed to obtain prior approval of a claimed expense as required by this directive or by court or administrative rule; or
  - d. The amount of time or expenses claimed exceeded the amount approved prior to performance of the interpreting or translating services.
6. An interpreter may submit a written request for the state court administrator to review a reduction in compensation by SCA personnel pursuant to section P.6. A written request for review must include an explanation for why the reduction of the interpreter's fee by SCA personnel was not appropriate. The state court administrator's decision on the matter will be final.

**Q. Clerk's responsibility to process interpreter and translator fee claims.**

1. Clerks of district court or designated staff are expected to check their generic clerk of court email inbox each day to determine whether an interpreter or translator has emailed the clerk a fee itemization form.
2. If an interpreter or translator has submitted such a fee itemization form, clerk's staff will promptly e-file the fee claim and direct it to the judge indicated on the fee itemization form, then e-mail a file-stamped copy of the fee itemization form back to the interpreter or translator.
3. After the judge enters an order approving the fee claim, clerk's staff will promptly email a copy of the order approving the fee claim to the interpreter or translator.
4. Clerk's staff will enter the appropriate FIN code into the case management system to direct reimbursement payments of oral language interpreter or translator fees by the party or parties to the judicial branch's jury, witness, and interpreter fund established pursuant to Iowa Code section 602.1302(3).

The prior administrative directive (2021-07, amended 03/04/2022) is hereby rescinded and this directive is effective on January 1, 2023.

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of January 2023.



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Robert Gast  
State Court Administrator

Copies to:  
Chief Judges  
District Court Administrators  
Clerks of District Court  
Director of Language Access Services  
District Language Access Coordinators  
Deputy State Court Administrator  
Legal Counsel to the State Court Administration  
Director of Finance  
Interpreters on Iowa's Roster of Court Interpreters

**Attachment 1**  
**State Rates for Reimbursement of Travel Related Costs for Court Interpreters**  
(Effective 7-1-21)

Types of travel expenses <sup>1</sup>	State Reimbursement Rates
Hotel / lodging*	\$80 per night plus applicable taxes
Meals <sup>2</sup>	\$8 – breakfast \$10 – lunch \$19 – dinner
Mileage (Interpreters are paid for their travel time; reimbursement for mileage is rarely approved by SCA) <sup>3</sup>	When approved by SCA, the per mile reimbursement rate for contractors is the same as the standard mileage rate for in-state travel reimbursement for state employees. The rate can be found at: <a href="https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/manuals-forms-references/reference-materials">https://das.iowa.gov/state-accounting/manuals-forms-references/reference-materials</a> .

<sup>1</sup> These expenses must be approved in writing before the expenses are incurred by the office required to pay the interpreter. (See administrative directive section I.)

<sup>2</sup> If an overnight stay is approved in advance, breakfast is reimbursed if a claimant leaves home *prior* to 6:00 AM to arrive at the work location; and dinner is reimbursed if the claimant returns home *after* 7:00 PM.

<sup>3</sup> SCA = State Court Administration

\*Note: the judicial branch strongly encourages independent contract interpreters who need overnight lodging to procure any necessary lodging services from providers that are certified as having completed human trafficking prevention training. Please see note at item (H)(3)(a) on Page 5.

***Note: This attachment will be updated when reimbursement rates change.***