



Working With Interpreters

Considerations for Law Enforcement Investigators



*This resource was developed as part of the **Partnerships to Address Labor Trafficking** project, designed to improve the awareness, responsiveness, and accountability among law enforcement, businesses, communities, and other stakeholders on labor trafficking. This project is a collaborative effort between the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Institute for Intergovernmental Research. For more information and additional resources, visit https://cops.usdoj.gov/labor_trafficking.*

Law enforcement investigators assigned to labor trafficking cases may encounter the need for language interpreters during the investigative process. Individuals involved in labor trafficking cases may not speak, write, or understand English well or may be deaf or hearing impaired. Some victims may be fluent in English but may prefer to discuss the circumstances of their cases in their native languages. Interpreters are neutral parties who provide critical services that should be made available to all victims under these circumstances for interviews, consultations, and ongoing communications during a case. Interpreters also may be necessary for suspect and witness interviews.

This resource will provide law enforcement agencies and investigators with practical considerations and promising practices in identifying and vetting interpreters, preparing for scheduled interviews, and victim-centered approaches in labor trafficking investigations. These

practical considerations are primarily focused on the initial stage of an investigation, once a potential labor trafficking situation is identified and shared with the investigator (e.g., as follow-up to a call for service, a hotline tip, or another type of case referral).

Identifying and Vetting Interpreters

- During the interview scheduling process, the interpreter selected should be properly trained and court-certified. Under exigent circumstances (e.g., first responders on patrol), there may be situations where other interpreters on scene are used. It is recommended to avoid any volunteer interpreters.
- The interpreter should not—under any circumstance—be associated with the victim, trafficker, or any aspect of the case.
- The interpreter should be well versed in the languages to be interpreted.
- The interpreter should have cultural understanding of the languages and be able to understand nonverbal communication or circumstances that are customs of a specific culture.
- It is recommended that investigators verbally discuss confidentiality with the interpreter during the initial vetting process and prior to the interview based on department policy.



- The interviewer should attempt to confirm that the interviewee and the interpreter speak the same language and dialect; however, this cannot be fully confirmed until the beginning of the interview, when the interpretation begins.
- It is recommended that interpreters be vetted within the criminal records systems if not already included in the court certification process.
- The process of identifying and vetting potential interpreters is time consuming and should be conducted prior to the immediate need for a case, if possible. Ideally, investigators should identify and develop a list of vetted interpreters for future needs.

Preparing for Interviews

- It is important for the interviewer and the interpreter to meet over the phone (or in person, if appropriate) as part of the vetting process to ensure they have a mutual understanding of the interview process, costs and hourly rates, and agency policies and procedures including confidentiality.
- The interviewer should set expectations and clearly identify the role of the interpreter up front.
- The interviewer should briefly explain the subject matter to ensure that the interpreter is emotionally prepared to handle the content of what will be discussed during the interview.

During the Interview

- Immediately prior to the interview (recommended 30 minutes before the scheduled start time), the interviewer should provide a brief overview of the situation in person and discuss any considerations for the interpreter to be mindful of for awareness.
- The interviewer should provide introductions to all parties and explain the roles of each individual participating in the interview. The role of the interpreter during the interview is to interpret questions and responses from both the interviewer and the interviewee. This should be clearly explained to all participants at the beginning of the interview.
- At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer should check with both the interviewee and the interpreter to ensure that everyone can understand one another and that the interpretation is comfortable for both parties. If there seems to be any misunderstanding or miscommunication, the interview should be rescheduled.
- The interpreter may need to take notes while the interviewee is speaking to ensure that the statement is accurately interpreted. It is critical to explain to the victims or witnesses that any notes written will be destroyed at the end of the interview to ensure confidentiality.





- The interviewer and the interpreter should speak in the first person and talk directly to the interviewee. The interviewer should ask questions directly to the interviewee, such as “can you tell me about . . .” instead of telling the interpreter “ask him about . . .”
- Interpreters should translate exactly what is stated by the interviewer and the interviewee.
- Interpreters should not summarize or elaborate on any questions or responses that the interviewer or interviewee states.
- If anyone asks a question or requests to clarify an answer, the interpreter should interpret the question/clarification to the appropriate party and await response.
- The interpreter should explain any nonverbal cues or cultural dynamics specific to the interviewee that arise as they happen, during a break, or after the interview.
- If, at any time, the interpreter identifies a conflict of interest or is uncomfortable with the material, the interpreter should notify the interviewer immediately.

Victim-Centered Considerations

- A victim may prefer to work with an interpreter of a particular gender or someone who is not native to his or her home country; investigators should attempt to meet this request, if possible.
- If possible, the same interpreter should be used for the victim throughout the investigation and prosecution of the case, as long as both parties are comfortable with the arrangement.
- During the course of the investigation, different interpreters should be used for the suspect, the victim, and the witnesses.
- Breaks should be scheduled if the interview is planned to last longer than an hour and should be taken as needed.
- In some cases, victims may not feel comfortable discussing details of the circumstances out loud and may prefer to write information down for translation. Interpreters should be prepared to translate and interpret written notes.
- Victims and interpreters should be notified at the beginning of the interview if the interview will be recorded (based on agency protocol).





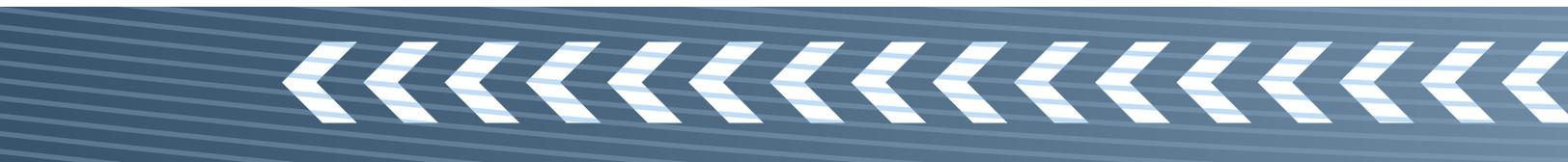
Where to Find Interpreters

Federal Court Interpreters

“Federal Court Interpreters,” U.S. Courts, <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters>.

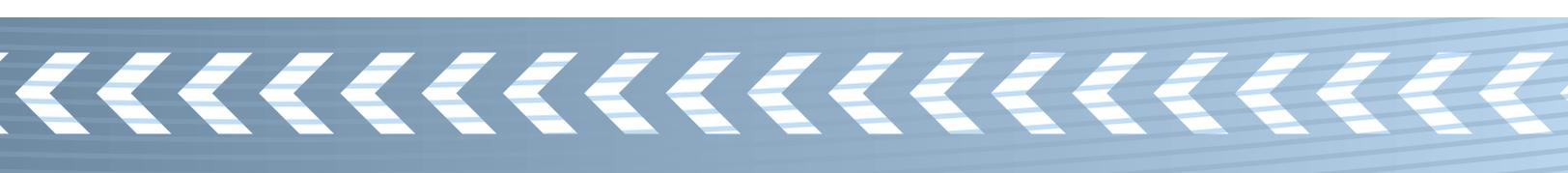
State Directories of Court-Certified Interpreters

State	State Court–Certified Interpreter Directories
Alabama	http://www.alacourt.gov/docs/Available%20Interpreters.pdf http://www.alacourt.gov/Interpreter-Overview.aspx
Alaska	https://courts.alaska.gov/language/info-interpreters.htm http://akijp.server306.com/language-interpreter-center/
Arizona	https://www.azcourts.gov/interpreter#ExplInterpreters https://apps.azcourts.gov/registry
Arkansas	https://www.arcourts.gov/directories/court-interpreters-registry https://www.arcourts.gov/sites/default/files/Registry_of_Certified_Registered_Court_Interpreters%202018%200607.pdf
California	https://www.courts.ca.gov/35273.htm
Colorado	https://www.courts.state.co.us/Administration/Custom.cfm?Unit=interp&Page_ID=117
Connecticut	https://www.jud.ct.gov/external/news/jobs/interpreter.htm
Delaware	https://courts.delaware.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/
District of Columbia	https://www.dccourts.gov/services/information-and-resources/interpreting-services
Florida	https://www.flcourts.org/Resources-Services/Court-Services/Court-Interpreting/Find-an-Interpreter
Georgia	http://coi.georgiacourts.gov/content/locate-interpreter
Hawaii	https://www.courts.state.hi.us/services/court_interpreting/list_of_registered_interpreters
Idaho	https://isc.idaho.gov/court-interpreter/court-interpreter
Illinois	http://www.illinoiscourts.gov/civiljustice/languageaccess/Interpreter_Registry.asp https://publicapps.illinoiscourts.gov/apex/f?p=303:25:
Indiana	https://www.in.gov/judiciary/interpreter/3448.htm
Iowa	https://www.iowacourts.gov/opr/court-interpreters/find-an-interpreter https://www.iowacourts.gov/static/media/cms/Roster_11118_0F1BD93074ECB.pdf
Kansas	http://www.kscourts.org/Rules/Language_Access.asp https://www.ncsc.org/Services-and-Experts/Areas-of-expertise/Language-access/Resources-for-Program-Managers/LAP-Map/Kansas.aspx



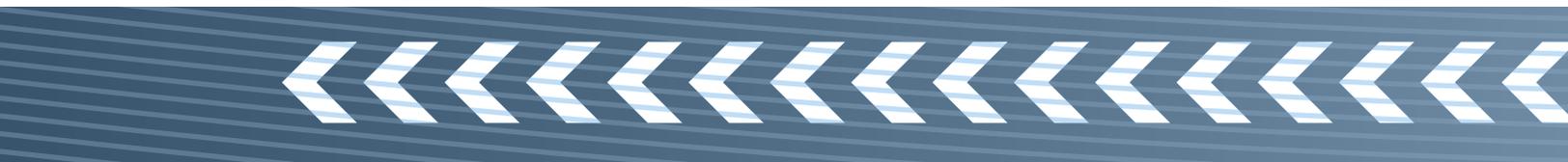


State	State Court–Certified Interpreter Directories
Kentucky	https://courts.ky.gov/courtprograms/CIS/Pages/default.aspx https://courts.ky.gov/courtprograms/CIS/Documents/DirectoryInterpreters.pdf
Louisiana	https://www.lasc.org/court_interpreters/court_interpreters.asp
Maine	https://www.courts.maine.gov/citizen_help/access_interp.html
Maryland	https://www.courts.state.md.us/interpreter
Massachusetts	https://www.mass.gov/doc/list-of-court-interpreters-available-for-out-of-court-assignments https://www.mass.gov/about-the-office-of-interpreter-services
Michigan	https://courts.michigan.gov/administration/scao/officesprograms/fli/pages/certified-court-interpreters.aspx
Minnesota	http://findinterpreters.courts.state.mn.us/
Mississippi	https://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/registry.php
Missouri	https://www.courts.mo.gov/page.jsp?id=182 https://www.courts.mo.gov/file.jsp?id=7378
Montana	https://www.mtd.uscourts.gov/interpreters https://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/civilrights/interpreters-list.pdf
Nebraska	https://supremecourt.nebraska.gov/directories/interpreter-directory
Nevada	https://nvcourts.gov/AOC/Programs_and_Services/Court_Interpreter/Roster/
New Hampshire	http://www.nhd.uscourts.gov/interpreter-information http://www.snhahc.org/Trained%20Interpreters%20List%20updated%202-11-19(1).pdf
New Jersey	https://www.njcourts.gov/public/langsrv.html https://www.njcourts.gov/public/assets/langSrvcs/directorycontacts.pdf?c=dBf
New Mexico	https://www.nmd.uscourts.gov/roster-federally-certified-interpreters-working-independent-contractors
New York	http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTINTERPRETER/index.shtml
North Carolina	https://www.nccourts.gov/programs/office-of-language-access-services/registry-of-spoken-foreign-language-court-interpreters https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/Spanish-Foreign-LanguageRegistry-Summer-20190624.pdf?aol3igWrc1RQvg7xuHc5.PrMcop5fH9w
North Dakota	https://www.ndcourts.gov/district-court/court-interpreters https://www.ndcourts.gov/Media/Default/Legal%20Resources/court-interpreter/roster.pdf
Ohio	https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/interpreterSvcs/certification/rosters/ https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/JCS/interpreterSvcs/certification/rosters/language.pdf
Oklahoma	http://www.oscn.net/static/forms/aoc_forms/interpreter.asp http://www.oscn.net/forms/interpreter/Certified%20Registry.pdf
Oregon	https://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/interpreters/Pages/default.aspx https://www.courts.oregon.gov/programs/interpreters/Documents/CertifiedInterpreterRoster.pdf
Pennsylvania	http://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/interpreter-program/interpreter-roster http://www.pacourts.us/assets/files/setting-3046/file-2488.pdf?cb=324e2d





State	State Court–Certified Interpreter Directories
Rhode Island	https://www.courts.ri.gov/Interpreters/englishversion/Pages/default.aspx
South Carolina	https://www.sccourts.org/cr/HowtoBecomeCourtInterpreter.cfm
South Dakota	https://ujs.sd.gov/uploads/pubs/Interpreters.pdf https://www.sdd.uscourts.gov/interpreters https://www.sdd.uscourts.gov/sites/sdd/files/Interpreter%20Roster20190122.pdf
Tennessee	http://www.tncourts.gov/programs/court-interpreters/find-court-interpreter
Texas	https://www.txcourts.gov/jbcc/licensed-court-interpreters.aspx
Utah	https://www.utcourts.gov/resources/interp/interpreters.html https://www.utcourts.gov/resources/interp/
Vermont	https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/programs-and-services/interpreters-and-translators-vermont-courts
Virginia	http://www.courts.state.va.us/courtadmin/aoc/djs/programs/interpreters/home.html http://www.vawd.uscourts.gov/media/2760/interpretercontactinformation.pdf
Washington	http://www.courts.wa.gov/programs_orgs/pos_interpret/
West Virginia	http://www.courtswv.gov/lower-courts/interpreter-translator/index-interpreter.html
Wisconsin	https://www.wicourts.gov/services/interpreter/search.htm
Wyoming	https://www.courts.state.wy.us/court-administration/court-interpreters/ http://www.courts.state.wy.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Interpreter-Roster-12-2018.pdf



Additional Resources

API-GBV (Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence). "How to Address Problems With Interpretation." Tipsheet. Oakland, CA: Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2015. <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/address-problems-interpretation/>.

API-GBV. "Serving Individuals Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind and Do Not Use American Sign Language." Tipsheet. Oakland, CA: Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2015. <https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/deaf-blind-hard-of-hearing/>.

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Office for Victims of Crime. "Interpreters." *Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide*. Accessed March 16, 2020. <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/3-operating-a-task-force/34-addressing-common-operational-challenges/interpreters/>.

Office for Victims of Crime. "Working with Interpreters." *Human Trafficking Task Force e-Guide*. Accessed March 16, 2020. <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eguide/5-building-strong-cases/53-victim-interview-preparation/working-with-interpreters/>.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Anti-Human Trafficking Manual for Criminal Justice Practitioners*. New York: United Nations, 2009. https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/TIP_module10_Ebook.pdf.



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About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology,

support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 130,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, round tables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, www.cops.usdoj.gov. This website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.





Labor trafficking is a crime that involves compelling or coercing a person to provide labor or services and affects persons of all ages, races, genders, and nationalities. Labor traffickers often prey on those with vulnerable life circumstances and economic hardships. Labor trafficking victims can be found in legal and illegal labor industries, as well as hidden behind closed doors and in plain view. This toolkit provides resources for law enforcement, businesses, communities, and other stakeholders to identify, respond to, and address labor trafficking and to support its victims and survivors.



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U.S. Department of Justice

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