

Suggestions for Further Research

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During the course of conducting the compensation study, the lead author identified several other research questions that could be pursued to further advance the courts' administration of court interpreting. Here are his suggestions for further research:

1. Research should be conducted to support the development of a white paper or set of guidelines to help court administrators develop a comprehensive system for managing court interpreting services. The specific areas that arise out of this research, and which would be complemented by other areas to be determined, would include the following:
 - Document the evolution of policies for contract interpreters (e.g., when did they begin, how often were they revised, etc.) and describe how courts developed their contract interpreter policies, especially the structures of their rates, analyze them, and develop a set of recommendations and perhaps model guides for managers to consider when evaluating their own policies or developing new ones. For example, what are the comparative pros and cons of hourly rates vs. the half-day, full-day approach?
 - Collect data from court systems to document the comparative advantages and disadvantages of (1) a single tier of interpreters (e.g., most state courts and the federal courts) versus (2) two or more tiers of interpreters (as pioneered in New Jersey and followed by a few states). For example, what are the pros and cons of having just a pass/fail option versus the approach of having multiple outcome categories?
 - Study the comparative robustness of the various models of certifying court interpreters and explore grounds for determining their proper relationship with compensation levels.
 - Develop suggested methods or formulae court managers might use to determine when creating staff court interpreter positions may be warranted.
 - Research the strategies that have been found to be effective in attracting linguists to the field of court interpretation and help courts retain interpreters once they are certified. This would also include identifying impediments that discourage entry into the field or nudge practicing interpreters out of the field.

2. The areas not included in this study should be explored to provide a more comprehensive picture of court interpreter compensation, especially since these are often quite vexing and pose challenges to managers of interpreting services. This includes documenting and analyzing how the courts—
 - compensate sign language interpreters,
 - handle interpreting services that must be purchased outside their official rate schedules, and
 - use commercial agencies.

This research would include assessing how to balance competing interests of different classes and types of interpreters (e.g, sign language vs. spoken language interpreters,

interpreters working in low-demand languages vs. interpreters working in high-demand languages, as well as purchasing services from individual contract interpreters vs. agencies that broker interpreting services).

3. No one knows how many staff court interpreter positions there are in the country and there are some observers who believe there aren't that many. It is also widely believed that there are hardly any staff interpreter positions for languages other than Spanish. However, this study suggests that the number of positions is certainly much larger than many think (see Tab Four of Part Two of the Compensation Database for a table that shows where the presence of staff court interpreters has been confirmed). Furthermore, in New Jersey alone, while there are approximately sixty staff interpreters who work in Spanish, there are five staff interpreter positions in other languages: two staff ASL interpreter positions and one each for Korean, Polish, and Portuguese and the lead author knows from years of work in the field that many other jurisdictions have positions in other languages (e.g., 11th Judicial Circuit, Dade County, Florida; Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois; Minnesota, New York and Oregon).

If the Bureau of Labor Statistics is ever going to compile statistics useful to court interpretation, it may be incumbent on the courts to show how substantial and dynamic the job market is for court interpretation. In addition, if interpreters in languages other than Spanish can assess what job opportunities may be out there for them, this might help improve attracting more qualified interpreters into the field in some of those languages.

4. It might be helpful to compare how courts compensate interpreters when compared to how interpreters are compensated in other venues. There are at least three avenues that might be instructive, the first two of which would be especially helpful for purposes of understanding the other markets with which the courts are competing for quality interpreting services:
 - **Closely related legal venues** where interpreting services are purchased, such as administrative law courts, law firms (e.g., depositions, interviews), and public law practice (prosecutors, public defenders, and legal aid agencies).
 - **Other fields of interpretation** such as conference interpreting (including, e.g., United Nations, Department of State), educational interpreting, medical interpreting, and community interpreting.
 - **Other professions with similar professional standards** (e.g., court reporters) with a goal to promoting comparable compensation rates for professions with similar requirements.