

Court language interpreter seminar set for Jan. 7-8 in Jackson

December 9, 2014

The Mississippi Administrative Office of Courts will conduct a seminar to introduce bilingual speakers to the requirements for court interpreting on Jan. 7-8, 2015, in Jackson.

The Ethics and Skill Building Seminar will be conducted at the Gartin Justice Building, 450 High Street in Jackson. Presentations are scheduled 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days. Participants should arrive by 8 a.m. Jan. 7 to sign in. An agenda is at <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/forms/SEMINAR%20AGENDA-JANUARY%202015.pdf>.

A written examination will be given Jan. 9 for participants who wish to pursue certification. The written exam will be given at the Gartin Building 10 a.m. to noon, with check-in beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Advance registration is required for the seminar and the exam. The registration deadline for both is Dec. 26, 2014. The fee to attend the seminar is \$75. The exam fee is \$25. A seminar registration form is available at <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/forms/REGISTRATION%20FORM%20January%202015.pdf>. An application form for the written exam is at <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/writtenexamination/Written%20Examination%20Application%20JAN2015.pdf>.

Three seminars are conducted each year in the northern, central and southern regions of the state. Other seminar dates for 2015 are:

- June 17-18 in Long Beach at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Park Campus, with the written exam scheduled for the following day, June 19, at the same location;
- October 7-8 in Tupelo at the Community Development Foundation Center, with the written exam scheduled for the following day, Oct. 9, at the same location.

Dates for the oral examinations will be posted later on the Mississippi Judiciary web site at <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/resources.html>.

The seminars will introduce prospective foreign language interpreters to interpreting in legal settings including the courtroom, depositions and other legal proceedings. Court interpreters must understand court proceedings as well as be fluent in English and a second language. Interpreters must be highly skilled in all modes of interpreting.

Administrative Office of Courts Deputy Director Ta'Shia Gordon will give an overview of Mississippi's Court Interpreter Credentialing Program. Seminar presenters are Certified Spanish Court Interpreters Georgina Barvie' and Arlin Lang of Gulfport, who have more than 20 years of combined experience in the fields of interpreting and translating.

The AOC developed the Mississippi Court Interpreter Credentialing Program to assist the courts in Mississippi in their endeavors to provide equal access to justice for limited English proficiency individuals. The AOC program will provide judges in all state courts

with a list of language interpreters who have demonstrated proficiency in oral and written interpretation of court proceedings. The credentialing program provides two levels of proficiency: registered and certified.

Language interpreters may be included on the list after having completed the AOC's credentialing program. The searchable registry is at this link: <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/registry.html>.

Gordon said, "Language access in the courts is vital to preserving the integrity of our legal system. Individuals with limited English proficiency must have access to an interpreter to understand court proceedings and their legal rights."

Attendance at the seminar is the first step in the program which will train, certify, and test individuals who wish to serve as interpreters in the courtrooms of Mississippi. The seminar will outline the requirements to achieve credentialing as a registered or certified courtroom interpreter.

AOC officials hope to train and issue credentials to interpreters in many languages. The biggest need is for those who speak Spanish or Vietnamese.

Seven interpreters have been certified since AOC conducted its first training workshop in November 2011. Two people from Gulfport and one each from French Camp, Memphis, Tenn., Nashville, Tenn., and Cordova, Tenn., are certified as Spanish language interpreters, and one from Goodlettsville, Tenn., is certified in Mandarin Chinese. Five others from Brandon, Clinton, Gulfport, Jackson and Newton are registered interpreters. Four of them are Spanish-speaking interpreters, and one speaks Russian.

Three seminars conducted in 2014 increased the number of registered interpreters. Gordon said, "I truly believe our efforts this past year have made significant strides in improving language access in our courts."

AOC adopted Standards for Court Interpreters and a Code of Ethics for Court Interpreters on Oct. 17, 2011. The rules for court interpreters apply to municipal court, justice court, youth court, county court, circuit court, chancery court and grand jury proceedings. Rules regarding certification are at this link: http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/rules_on_standards.pdf. Other information about the interpreter program may be found here: <http://courts.ms.gov/aoc/courtinterpreter/resources.html>.

The AOC standards and code of ethics are modeled on standards for language interpretation adopted by the National Center for State Courts' Consortium for Language Access in the Courts. The Mississippi AOC is a member of the Consortium. Court interpreters who are certified in other Consortium member states may seek reciprocity.

For additional information, contact Ta'Shia Gordon at 601-576-4632.

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