

WASHINGTON STATE
DEPARTMENT of CORRECTIONS

COURT INTERPRETER GUIDELINES

VISION

Working Together for SAFE Communities

Mission Statement

The Department of Corrections will enhance community safety by collaborating with its criminal justice partners, victims, citizens, and other stakeholders; holding offenders accountable; administering criminal sanctions and effective correctional programs; and providing leadership for the future.

Interpreting for the Department of Corrections

Welcome to the Department of Corrections (DOC). As an interpreter, you are contracted by the DOC to provide interpreting and translating services so that deaf offenders and offenders with limited English proficiency have access to DOC programs, services, and activities.

Expectations

Interpreters, like all DOC employees, need to maintain a high standard of personal and professional conduct that promoted public confidence in our ability to enhance community safety. Interpreting for DOC demands accuracy, confidentiality, ethics, and a high degree of professionalism.

The need for unquestioned integrity among interpreters is obvious. Interpreters are not allowed to render services when the interpreter is an associate, friend, or relative of the offender as a conflict of interest may consciously or subconsciously affect the quality or substance of the interpretation.

The interpreter should interpret or translate the material thoroughly and precisely, without adding or omitting anything, and stating as nearly as possible what has been stated by the speaker, giving consideration to variations in grammar and syntax for both languages involved.

The interpreter should not interject his or her personal moods or attitudes. The interpreter should use the level of communication that best conveys the meaning of the source. Idioms, proverbs, and saying rarely can be interpreted literally, so the interpreter should relate the meaning of the idiom or saying.

Working in a Prison

There are many sources of frustration when working in a prison. Remember that security takes first priority. Prison schedules are subject to change at a moment's notice and you may find yourself in a situation where you cannot enter the facility at the time you were requested to be there. When this happens, the interpreter should wait until he or she is excused from the job or is given directions on when to return.

Interpreters are expected to follow a code of ethics, which includes keeping information about offenders confidential. However, confidentiality does not extend to information that may lead to

injury, danger, or escape. Everyone working for DOC has a responsibility to report any suspected activity that may indicate an escape is occurring, or information that leads you to believe an escape is being planned. If a safety or security risk is involved, the interpreter must inform DOC staff. If a staff member asks you what you are doing or where you are going, you need to be able to tell them the area and the name of the offender you are working with.

It is important that the interpreter understands some of the specific prohibitions that DOC must enforce. You are not allowed to:

Engage in personal relationships with offender, offender families, or visitors;

Barter or make personal deals with offenders, offender families, or visitors;

Transmit messages for offenders outside of the interpreting situation;

Use profanity or inflammatory remarks with offenders or staff.

Contraband:

Contraband (narcotics, alcoholic beverages, explosives, weapons) are prohibited at all DOC institutions, offices, and facilities.

All materials you bring in with you are subject to search. Bring only what you need and leave everything else home or locked in your car. Never bring money, credit cards, wallet, purse, phone books, pocketknives, cigarettes, cigarette lighters, cell phones, pagers, or medications into a prison facility unless you have cleared it with staff beforehand.

Searches:

Any person and/or vehicle on DOC grounds may be subject to search. Searches can take the form of an electronic search using a metal detector, a canine search using trained dogs, or a pat/frisk search with sufficient cause.

Your vehicle may be subject to an external inspection by a correctional staff member or canine unit. In addition, lockers, purses, packages, briefcases, and any container brought into the facility may be searched in compliance with Department policy on searches.

Keys:

Never leave your keys in an unattended vehicle or unsecured location. Your personal keys are not allowed in the prison. Check with main control to see how the facility wants you to secure your personal keys.

Correspondence:

Offenders are prohibited from initiating correspondence with interpreters and interpreters may not correspond with offenders without specific written approval.

Offender Visiting:

You may not be placed on any offender's visiting list if you interpret in the facility where the offender is housed. If you are a member of the immediate family or a close friend of an offender in a facility, you must declare this fact before entering the facility to interpret.

Offender Manipulation:

Offenders are convicted felons and may try to take advantage of you if you let them. The following is only a partial list of early warning signs that may turn into a set-up by the offender. The offender:

- Engages in long conversations about your likes, dislikes, or other personal matters;
- Suddenly offers favors, is excessively nice and/or complimentary, comments on how you look;
- Tries to discuss the offender's personal problems with you or tries to engage in idle conversations regarding the offender's personal relationships;
- Attempts to turn staff / interpreters against other staff / interpreters;
- Instills staff / interpreters with fear.

Do not share any personal information about your self with an offender. Examples of personal information include:

- Your address or phone number;
- Where you went to school;
- How you learned a language;
- If your parent are deaf (for deaf interpreters);
- Anything about your children or spouse;
- Your nationality;
- If you know the same people the offender knows;
- Any other personal information.

Do not share personal information about staff or other interpreters.

It is understood that interpreters may need to talk with an offender to get an understanding of the offender's language and interpreting needs. Examples of the kinds of things you can talk about include the weather, sports, and/or things in the news.

Manipulation is a process, over time, that causes one person to be "backed into a corner" by another. You should understand your own strengths and weaknesses because a manipulative offender will find your weak spot. Be aware that kindnesses may be considered a weakness and may make you an easy mark. If at any time you feel uncomfortable in a situation, consult DOC staff or the HQ Language Program Manager.

Never accept a favor. Do not take anything from or give anything to an offender. This includes, but is not limited to money, food items, cigarettes, newspaper or magazine articles, phone books, flowers, notes to or from other offenders, poems, stories, or letters.

Manipulation remains one of the biggest concerns of staff and others who work with offenders. Any attempt at manipulation or "game playing" should be reported immediately to the Shift Commander and as soon as possible to the Language Program Manager.

Custodial Sexual Misconduct:

Sexual misconduct with an offender, including sexual harassment, is a serious offense and is against the law. Please review the attached brochure entitled "Staff Misconduct with Offenders" for additional information about the law pertaining to contractors and volunteers.

Religious Beliefs:

It is not appropriate for an interpreter to share his or her religious beliefs with an offender. Attempting to persuade offenders to convert to your beliefs violates DOC policies.

Emergency Situations:

The safety and security of community, staff, and offenders are the most important concerns in any correctional facility. DOC staff are trained and have planned for emergency situations. It is important that you follow staff instructions and know where to go and what to do in an emergency. Please be mindful that during an emergency situation, staff's first priority is safety and security. They will be focused on resolving the emergency and most likely will be unwilling to stop and inform you of the entire situation.

ID Badge:

You will be issued a Visitor identification badge before you enter the facility. The ID should be worn on the left chest area so it is in clear view at all times. The ID should never be given to anyone else. Lost, stolen, or damaged ID cards should be reported to the Shift Commander or Public Access staff immediately. The ID card must be returned to Public Access staff before leaving the facility.

ID Badge: (for regular contract interpreters at the Monroe Correctional Complex only):

After a background check has been completed and fingerprints have been taken, the interpreter will be issued a yellow DOC identification badge. The ID should be worn on the left chest area so it is in clear view at all times. The ID should not be used as identification, except as required to access DOC facilities while in the performance of DOC business. Security of your ID card is a priority. ID badges should never be given to anyone else. Lost, stolen, or damaged ID cards should be reported to the Deaf Offender Services Manager or the facility's Superintendent /designee immediately. The ID card is the property of DOC and is to be returned when the interpreter is no longer providing services.

Dress Code:

Each DOC facility has a dress code for visitors and non-custody staff. Clothing must be in good repair and cannot advocate alcohol/drug use or inflammatory or controversial issues. Socks or stockings are required. With modesty as the focus, the following list of clothing is **NOT** allowed:

- NO shorts, cutoffs, or culottes;
- NO sleeveless blouses or shirts;
- NO tank tops;
- NO short skirts (slacks are encouraged);
- NO low cut clothing (exposing undergarments, cleavage, or back);
- NO tight fitting clothing (spandex, lycra, rubberized, elasticized)

Visitors' pamphlets are available for each facility detailing visitor rules and dress codes.

Vehicles:

Interpreters should park in the visitors' parking lot. Lock your vehicle and close all windows before leaving the parking lot and entering the facility.