

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why Certification?

In Virginia, while there's no statutory requirement that only certified interpreters be used during court proceedings, preference is given to certified interpreters due to their proven competence and skills. Courts are encouraged to request these certified professionals, as they have undergone a rigorous certification process that ensures they can provide accurate and effective language interpretation services. This emphasis on certified interpreters helps maintain the integrity of court proceedings and ensures that all parties have fair access to justice.

2. What languages are certifiable in Virginia?

Virginia certifies all 18 languages certifiable by the National Center for State Courts: [{Interpreter info | NCSC}](#)

Amharic
Arabic (Egyptian)
Arabic (Levantine)
Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian
Cantonese
Filipino (Tagalog)
French
Haitian Creole
Hmong
Khmer
Korean
Mandarin
Polish
Portuguese
Russian
Somali
Spanish
Turkish
Vietnamese

3. What about languages that are not certifiable in Virginia?

For languages that are not certifiable through the National Center for State Courts, Virginia offers a “qualified” status. To become qualified the interpreter candidate has to complete steps one through four of the certification process and sign the interpreter’s oath.

4. How do I register for the written exam?

Candidates who wish to register for the written exam (step three of the certification process) must have completed step one (webinars) and step two (oral proficiency interviews) to be eligible to register. You can find the schedule for registration dates [here](#).

5. How do I register for the oral exam?

Candidates who have completed steps one through four (webinars, OPIs, written exam, and orientation) may sign up online for the oral exam. The oral exam is given twice a year in two locations. Candidates may not take the oral exam more than once in a 6-month period. Registration is open at announced times until capacity is reached. You can find the schedule for registration dates [here](#).

6. What if I did not pass the written exam?

You can take the written exam every six months for up to 3 attempts. Three unsuccessful attempts require the candidate to provide a certificate of completion, at candidates' expense, of an English course. Acceptable courses:

- TOEFL Prep Course
- Upper-level English college course
- Courses specific to the preparation of the interpreter written exam.

After completion of a qualified English course, two more attempts will be permitted before disqualification from the program.

7. What if I complete the webinars, oral proficiency interviews, the written exam and the 2-day interpreter orientation but decide not to take the oral exam?

Candidates are strongly encouraged to finish the certification process. However, those who choose not to complete the certification process but do complete the first 4 components can be listed as non-certified interpreters. Candidates can also decide to wait until they feel well prepared and take the oral exam. Please be aware that certification may be required, in the future, and that preference is given to certified interpreters over non-certified interpreters in Virginia courts.

8. I completed the orientation and passed the written exam in another state. May I register for the oral exam in Virginia?

With some exceptions, the Commonwealth of Virginia accepts certification components from other states and the federal courts. Please contact the Department of Judicial Services, Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia by email at languages@vacourts.gov to request an evaluation of your status.

9. What other types of certifications does Virginia accept?

Any person who has met the requirements for federal court certification or certification by a state judicial system participating in the State Court Interpreter Certification Consortium administered by the National Center for State Courts, and the components meet Virginia certification requirements. Please visit the page on [Reciprocity Requirements](#).

10. If I took the oral exam but did not pass one or more of the sections, do have I have to retake the entire oral exam?

Yes. The Supreme Court of Virginia does not offer individual sections of the oral exam.

11. I successfully completed interpreter testing and training elements at Virginia standards, but I would like to retake an exam for a higher score. Can I register to retake an exam?

Virginia does not administer retakes of certification exams once the candidate has qualified for interpreter certification in Virginia.

12. I am interested in earning federal certification. How do I become a federally certified foreign language interpreter?

For information on federal certification, visit <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/federal-court-interpreters>.

13. I passed my exams and am certified! Am I now an employee of the courts?

No, you are not an employee of the courts. You are an independent contractor. The Foreign Language Services Division (FLS) keeps a list of certified, non-certified and qualified interpreter contractors. In most cases, when a court needs an interpreter, the clerk requests an interpreter through FLS. Language access coordinators then contact an interpreter to arrange the assignment. Regular employee positions are advertised through [Jobs.Virginia.gov](#).

14. How are interpreters paid?

Interpreters are independent contractors and must establish their own taxpayer ID number to be paid by the Supreme Court of Virginia. Submitting invoices and receiving payment for interpreting services are covered in detail during the 2-day interpreter orientation.

15. How much are interpreters paid?

Compensation of an interpreter appointed by the court is fixed by the court, in accordance with guidelines set by the Judicial Council of Virginia. Current rates and guidelines can be found in Chapter 8 of the [Language Access Plan](#).

16. What if I have more questions?

Please email any questions regarding certification to languages@vacourts.gov.