



Designation: **F2089 – 01 (Reapproved 2007) F2089 – 15**

## Standard Guide Practice for Language Interpretation Services Interpreting<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation F2089; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

### 1. Scope

1.1 This guide identifies the components of quality language interpretation services and establishes criteria for each component. These criteria define the minimum standard of quality services in the language interpretation industry with reference to distinctive characteristics of specific settings. The needs analysis identifies a procedure for making an informed choice of interpretation services. In the language industry, translation refers to the translation of a written text, whereas interpretation refers to the translation of spoken or signed communication.

### 2. Professional Judgment Caveat

2.1 *This guide offers an organized collection of information and does not recommend a specific course of action. This document cannot replace education or experience and should be used in conjunction with professional judgment. Not all aspects of this guide may be applicable in all circumstances. This ASTM standard is not intended to represent or replace the standard of care by which the adequacy of a given professional service shall be judged, nor should this document be applied without consideration of a project's unique aspects. The word "Standard" in the title of this document means only that the document has been approved through the ASTM consensus process.*

### 3. Definitions of Interpretation

3.1 *interpretation*—the process of understanding and analyzing a spoken or signed message and re-expressing that message faithfully, accurately and objectively in another language, taking the cultural and social context into account.

3.2 *simultaneous interpretation*—a highly complex cognitive activity that requires the interpreter to listen, analyze, comprehend, convert, edit, and reproduce in real time a speaker or signer's message while the speaker or signer continues to speak or sign, in a specific social context.

3.3 *consecutive interpretation*—a highly complex cognitive activity that requires the interpreter to listen, analyze, comprehend, convert, edit, and reproduce the original message after the speaker or signer pauses, in a specific social context. Consecutive interpretation is likely to take longer than simultaneous, because the interpreter does not interpret while the speaker or signer is speaking or signing.

### 4. Referenced Documents

4.1 *ASTM Standards:*<sup>2</sup>

F1562 *Guide for Use-Oriented Foreign Language Instruction*

4.2 *ISO/IEC Standards:*<sup>3</sup>

IEC 60914:1998 *Conference Systems: Electrical and Audio Requirements* *Conference Systems: Electrical and Audio Requirements*

ISO 2603:1998 *Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation—General Characteristics and Equipment* *Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation—General Characteristics and Equipment*

ISO 4043:1998 *Mobile Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation—General Characteristics and Equipment* *Mobile Booths for Simultaneous Interpretation—General Characteristics and Equipment*

<sup>1</sup> This guidepractice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee F43 on Language Services and Products and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee F43.01 on Language Interpreting.

Current edition approved April 1, 2007March 15, 2015. Published July 2007May 2015. Originally approved in 2001. Last previous edition approved in 20042007 as F2089 – 01F2089 – 01 (2007). DOI: 10.1520/F2089-01R07-10.1520/F2089-15.

<sup>2</sup> For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, [www.astm.org](http://www.astm.org), or contact ASTM Customer Service at [service@astm.org](mailto:service@astm.org). For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

<sup>3</sup> Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

#### 4.3 *Other Documents:*

~~Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990~~  
~~Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary or Artistic Works~~  
~~Civil Rights Act of 1964~~  
~~Executive Order 13166, August 11, 2000~~  
~~Guidance Memorandum; Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination—Persons with Limited English Proficiency, Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health and Human Services, August 2000~~  
~~Patient’s Bill of Rights, American Hospital Association, 1978~~  
~~Universal Convention on Copyright~~  
~~U.S. Department of Justice: Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency, “LEP Guidance,” August 11, 2000~~  
~~28 U.S.C. § 1827 Federal Court Interpreters Act (1978 Court Interpreters Act and 1988 Amendment)~~

### 5. Terminology

#### 5.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

- 5.1.1 *active language*—a working language into which an interpreter interprets.
- 5.1.2 *“A” language*—a language in which the interpreter has educated native proficiency in speaking and listening (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)).
- 5.1.3 *bidirectional interpreting*—interpretation between two languages where each functions as both a source and target language (for example, an attorney-client interview where each speaks a different language).
- 5.1.4 *“B” language*—a language in which the interpreter has full functional proficiency in speaking and listening (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)).
- 5.1.5 *“C” language*—a language in which the interpreter has full functional proficiency in listening (see [Table 2](#)).
- 5.1.6 *client*—an individual, institution or other entity that procures interpretation services.
- 5.1.7 *consultant interpreter*—an interpreter who contracts directly with a client to provide all interpretation services necessary, as well as related administrative and organizational tasks for the event.
- 5.1.8 *domain*—the subject matter, field, sector or industry.
- 5.1.9 *language combination*—the set of working languages of an individual interpreter.
- 5.1.10 *limited English proficiency (LEP)*—a legal concept referring to a level of English proficiency that is insufficient to ensure equal access to public services provided in English without an interpreter.
- 5.1.11 *multidirectional interpreting*—interpretation between two or more source and target languages.
- 5.1.12 *passive language*—a working language out of which an interpreter interprets.
- 5.1.13 *provider*—an entity (for example, an interpretation agency, consultant interpreter, or technological equipment company, that contracts to deliver interpretation services or a component thereof).
- 5.1.14 *relay interpreting*—using an interpretation of the original message as a secondary source language for interpretation into another target language (for example, an utterance in Japanese is interpreted directly into English, and that English output is the basis for the interpretation into French).
- 5.1.15 *remote interpretation*—interpretation provided by an interpreter who is not on site (for example, interpretation via telephone or videoconferencing).
- 5.1.16 *setting*—the domain and the type of event for which interpretation is provided.
- 5.1.17 *sight translation*—translation of a written document into spoken/signed language.
- 5.1.18 *source language*—the language of a speaker/signer who is being interpreted.
- 5.1.19 *target language*—the language of the person receiving interpretation.
- 5.1.20 *type of event*—the physical location, number of participants and type of discourse.
- 5.1.21 *unidirectional interpreting*—interpretation from only one source language (for example, a main speaker’s presentation being interpreted for listeners).
- 5.1.22 *whisper interpreting*—whispered simultaneous interpretation, without equipment, for one or two listeners.
- 5.1.23 *working language*—a language an interpreter uses professionally.

### 6. Summary of Guide

6.1 When two or more people are unable to communicate with each other due to language differences, they need an interpreter. The interpreter’s task is to remove the language barrier to the extent possible. The interpreter enables the participants to

communicate in real time almost as if there were no language barrier. The participants should be aware that everything said or signed will be interpreted and that all participants should interact directly with each other as if they were in a monolingual environment.

6.2 When interpreting, the interpreter may speak/sign either at the same time (simultaneous interpretation) or after the speaker/signer pauses (consecutive interpretation; see 3.2, 3.3, and 10.1).

6.3 The interpretation may be from one language into another only (unidirectional) or back and forth between languages (bi- or multi-directional).

6.4 The setting in which the interpretation takes place will dictate the particulars of how the interpretation is carried out (see Section 11).

6.5 In certain settings, the provision of interpreters is mandated by governmental and/or regulatory bodies (for example, Executive Order 13166, August 11, 2000 and US Department of Justice “LEP Guidance,” August 11, 2000).

## 7. Significance and Use

7.1 This guide is intended to serve clients and providers of language interpretation services and the institutions providing professional training for interpreters. It is the responsibility of clients and providers of language services to ensure that participants in interpreted events are informed of how to best make use of interpretation services.

7.2 To ensure quality interpretation, the following components shall be considered. These components are discussed in detail in subsequent sections:

7.2.1 *Interpreter Qualifications*—Assists the client and provider in determining the interpreter qualifications appropriate to the need at hand. These qualifications consist of command of languages, interpreting skills, and knowledge of subject matter (see Section 8).

7.2.2 *Needs Analysis*—Assists the client in determining the components of the service which correspond to the most appropriate, reliable, cost-effective, and efficient solution for the need at hand. Provides the client with a process for the procurement of high quality interpretation services (see Section 9).

7.2.3 *Elements Common to All Interpreted Events*—Describes factors that all interpretation settings share (see Section 10).

7.2.4 *Settings*—Assists the client and provider in identifying factors specific to interpretation in a given setting, which may include a description of the domain and type of event, mode of interpretation, interpreter qualifications, responsibilities of all participants as well as limitations and complicating factors in specific settings (see Section 11).

7.2.5 *Technological Requirements*—Describes the equipment for particular modes of interpretation that may be used in specific settings and types of events (see Section 12).

7.2.6 *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*—Defines a code of ethics and professional conduct for interpreters. All professional interpreters are expected to adhere to this code (see Section 13).

7.2.7 *Responsibilities of Providers*—Defines the responsibilities of providers to clients and interpreters when offering and implementing interpretation services (see Section 14).

7.2.8 *Responsibilities of Clients*—Describes responsibilities of clients to providers and interpreters that are not covered elsewhere in this guide (see Section 15).

## 8. Interpreter Qualifications

8.1 Interpretation is a complex, demanding task that requires an excellent command of languages, possession of skills and abilities specific to interpretation, and knowledge of the subject matter being interpreted. Bilingualism alone is insufficient.

### 8.2 Command of Languages:

8.2.1 Languages that interpreters use professionally are usually referred to as working languages (see Fig. 1). Interpreters shall constantly maintain their working languages at a high level of proficiency.

### 8.3 Interpreting Skills and Abilities:

8.3.1 In addition to the command of languages as described above, the interpretation process requires the following skills and abilities. These interpreting skills and abilities may be documented through formal training in the skill of interpretation, testing, a degree, certification, and professional experience. Interpreting skills and abilities include:

8.3.1.1 *Attention Skills*—In order to listen at a high level of concentration, enabling the interpreter to analyze the meaning of the message completely and accurately at all times;

8.3.1.2 *Analytical Skills*—In order to construe the meaning of the message completely and accurately under severe time constraints;

8.3.1.3 *Memory Skills*—In order to retain the message long enough to render it completely and accurately in the target language while under stress;

8.3.1.4 *Language Transfer Skills*—In order to rapidly and efficiently find the congruent expression in the target language.

8.3.1.5 *Note-taking Skills*—In order to support memory in consecutive interpretation for spoken languages and, in language pairs with greater grammatical differences, simultaneous interpretation. The interpreter should have a note-taking system that is specific to the task of interpretation.

8.3.1.6 *Cultural Awareness*—In order to understand and render the message completely and accurately, including its culturally specific references and concepts;

8.3.1.7 *Clear and Audible Speech/Visible Signing*—In order to be heard and understood by the audience with little effort at all times;

8.3.1.8 *Demeanor Appropriate to Setting*—In order to avoid calling undue attention to him/herself, which detracts from the original speaker’s message. Appropriate demeanor reflects the interpreter’s professionalism and includes the ability to convey emotional content without mimicking the speaker;

8.3.1.9 *Adaptability*—In order to interpret in a wide variety of settings (see Section 11);

8.3.1.10 *Stamina*—In order to provide high quality interpretation for the duration of the assignment;

8.3.1.11 *Ability to Cope with Stress*—In order to balance the interpretation task and related factors, such as emotionally charged subject matter and settings, travel and public-speaking, which are an inherent part of interpreting.

**8.4 Knowledge of Subject Matter:**

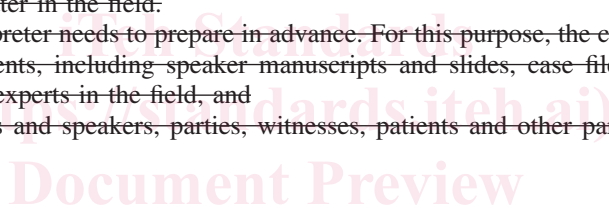
8.4.1 The interpretation process also requires knowledge of the subject matter and its terminology.

8.4.1.1 In general, the interpreter should have a broad general education, including familiarity with the latest developments in a wide variety of fields and subject areas, which may include the following:

- (1) Post-secondary education or its equivalent;
- (2) The ability to familiarize him/herself with new fields rapidly and thoroughly, and
- (3) In-depth knowledge in one or more fields of specialization, which, in certain fields, includes certification through testing (for example, in legal and healthcare interpreting).

8.4.1.2 For a specific assignment, the interpreter should have a range of knowledge wide enough to understand and express complex and/or specialized subject matter in the field.

- (1) To meet this objective, the interpreter needs to prepare in advance. For this purpose, the client shall provide the following:
  - (a) Access to all relevant documents, including speaker manuscripts and slides, case files, videotapes and other media, glossaries and terminology, as well as experts in the field, and
  - (b) The opportunity for organizers and speakers, parties, witnesses, patients and other participants to brief the interpreter before and during the assignment.



**9. Needs Analysis**

9.1 This section describes factors that clients, interpreters, and providers of interpretation services shall take into consideration in planning interpretation services. In order to ensure high quality interpretation, coordination between clients, interpreters and providers is necessary. To this end, the client should be prepared to provide background information on the event. The following factors should be considered during the needs analysis process: the setting and its venue, language needs and staffing, technological needs and the availability of preparatory documents and materials (see Fig. 2).

9.2 *Setting*—The needs analysis of the setting should identify:

- 9.2.1 The domain (for example, business and industry, health-care, law, public sector agencies);
- 9.2.2 Type of event (for example, field trip, press conference, classroom instruction, informational interview, live broadcast, negotiation, large meeting or assembly, small meeting, presentation, or telephone interpreting);
- 9.2.3 Objective of the event;
- 9.2.4 Duration of event;
- 9.2.5 When interpretation is needed (that is, scheduling of interpreters);
- 9.2.6 Number of people requiring interpretation (for example, an auditorium audience or large group, etc.);
- 9.2.7 Use of remote interpretation, either telephone or videoconference, and
- 9.2.8 Special needs.

9.3 *Venue*—The needs analysis of the venue should include the following:

- 9.3.1 Seating appropriate for interpreters and participants requiring interpretation;
- 9.3.2 Adequate lighting to ensure visibility;
- 9.3.3 Direct view of the room for the interpreter, as appropriate, and
- 9.3.4 Adequate working space for the interpreter, including a suitable chair, water and a glass;
- 9.3.5 *For Meetings:*
  - 9.3.5.1 Type of facility reserved for the meeting (for example, hotel, conference center, office, or boardroom);
  - 9.3.5.2 Reservations for room(s), including sufficient time to install, test, and remove equipment.
  - 9.3.5.3 Size of the room(s) in square feet; number of people in the room requiring interpretation and/or receivers;
  - 9.3.5.4 Configuration of the room(s) (for example, theatre, classroom, hollow square or U-shape, boardroom);



9.3.5.5 Planned use of microphones (table, lapel, lavalier, roaming), both for speakers and participants who may ask questions, or for meetings of less than 10 participants;

9.3.5.6 Positioning of interpreter close enough to speaker(s) to hear/see and be heard/seen clearly by all participants needing the services;

9.3.5.7 For simultaneous interpretation, availability of built-in booths for spoken language interpretation and availability of an appropriate platform for signed language interpretation, and

9.3.5.8 Adequate space for portable booths or platforms, including positioning of booths so that the spoken language interpreters have a clear view of speakers and screens, and positioning of the signed language interpreter's platform so that the signed language interpreter has a clear view of speakers and screens and the consumer also has a clear view of the interpreter.

9.3.6 *For Trials and Hearings:*

9.3.6.1 Availability of interpretation equipment in the courtroom;

9.3.6.2 Security limitations prohibiting the use of equipment in the courtroom. If so, contact court administrator, bailiff or sheriff;

9.3.6.3 Responsibility for handing out and explaining the use of equipment, and

9.3.6.4 Use of telephone interpreting;

9.3.7 For health-care settings, see Checklist for Health-Care Interpreting.

9.4 *Language Needs and Staffing*—The needs analysis of language should identify:

9.4.1 Language(s) the speakers/signers will use, their countries of origin, and special dialects if relevant;

9.4.2 Language(s) the listeners/signers will use, their countries of origin, and special dialects if relevant;

9.4.3 Source and target language combinations;

9.4.4 Number of listeners and speakers/signers;

9.4.5 Mode of interpretation, either consecutive or simultaneous, with or without equipment;

9.4.6 Subject matter of the event, including complexity of content and availability of background materials or transcripts of materials and presentations;

9.4.7 Number of interpreters needed, their qualifications, and their language combinations;

9.4.8 Match between the interpreters' language combinations and the source and target languages of the event;

9.4.9 Interpreter scheduling;

9.4.10 Linguistic, emotional or other stress factors of which the interpreter should be aware, and

9.4.11 Gender issues.

9.5 *Technological Needs*—Factors to consider:

9.5.1 Availability of adequate amperage in the room;

9.5.2 Special labor requirements;

9.5.3 Adequate testing before beginning interpretation, including:

9.5.3.1 An opportunity to walk through the facility and check the status of the equipment;

9.5.3.2 Testing microphones and earphones of the interpreters and all participants with the interpreters present;

9.5.3.3 A trial run for staged or scripted events;

9.5.3.4 Testing of telephone and/or satellite connections, and

9.5.3.5 Verification that there is no sound interference and that the interpreters do not hear their own voices in their earphones.

9.5.4 *Sound:*

9.5.4.1 Sufficient volume and fidelity;

9.5.4.2 Lightweight earphones with no thick padding;

9.5.4.3 Sound in both ears;

9.5.4.4 Monophonic headphones;

9.5.4.5 Interpreter-operated volume control, and

9.5.4.6 Cough button.

9.5.5 *Booths:*

9.5.5.1 Soundproofing;

9.5.5.2 Technical capability to work in both directions from one booth;

9.5.5.3 Ventilation without excessive noise;

9.5.5.4 Visibility between booths to allow communication between interpreters;

9.5.5.5 Visibility between the interpreters and technicians;

9.5.5.6 Microphones with on/off switch for each interpreter;

9.5.5.7 Lighting with on/off switch for each interpreter that does not produce sound interference;

9.5.5.8 Sufficient table space at standard height for the comfortable use of resource materials, and

9.5.5.9 Inaccessibility of booths to anyone other than interpreters, except when a technician is needed.

9.5.6 *For Telephone Interpreting:*

9.5.6.1 Feasible number of participants for conference calls;

9.5.6.2 Central placement of speakerphones;

9.5.6.3 Avoidance of cellular phones due to poor transmission quality and lack of confidentiality, and

9.5.6.4 Telephone equipment with conference capability or special telephonic equipment that allows the interpreter to work in the simultaneous mode is preferred.

9.5.7 *For Videoconferencing and Broadcast Interpreting:*

9.5.7.1 Prior consultation with interpreters about the feasibility of the project,

9.5.7.2 Professional coordination of sound and video (see ISO 2603, ISO 4043, and IEC 60914,

9.5.7.3 Sound-synchronized and high quality video allowing the interpreter to clearly distinguish facial expressions and gestures of speakers and participants,

9.5.7.4 Awareness of additional stress factors of videoconferencing requiring appropriate workload management (for example, loss of nonverbal information and eye fatigue),

9.5.7.5 Interpreters' ability to see the set or meeting rooms and all participants. If this is not possible for technical reasons, use of two color TV monitors, one showing the image being broadcast to the viewers and the other the rest of the set or meeting rooms, and

9.5.7.6 Ability of the interpreters to communicate with the technicians at all times via an intercom system that does not interfere with the broadcast.

9.5.7.7 *For Scripted and Pre-Recorded Programs:*

(1) Availability of script or log of the program for the interpreters,

(2) Appropriate synchronization of questions and answers, if applicable, and

(3) If visual sequences (video segments) are to be inserted, finishing of the interpretation before it is covered over by the sound track of the insert.

9.5.7.8 *Credits*—Mentioning of interpreters' names, either flashed on screen during the interpretation or listed at the end with the other credits (see Universal Convention on Copyright and Bern Convention for the Protection of Literary or Artistic Works).

9.6 *Document Preparation*, including:

9.6.1 Procurement of preparatory documents and materials for interpreters (for example, manuscripts, overhead transparencies, company and product information, and case files),

9.6.2 Arrangements to provide the interpreters with last minute documents,

9.6.3 Determination if translation is necessary, contracting of appropriate translation services, including:

9.6.4 Pre-event translation (written),

9.6.5 Sight translation needs, and

9.6.6 Post-event translation (written).

## 10. Elements Common to All Interpreted Events

10.1 *Mode of Interpretation*—Interpretation services are offered in two different modes: consecutive and simultaneous. Not all interpreters work in both modes. In some but not all settings, either mode is possible. The number of languages involved, the setting, and time considerations determine the most suitable mode or whether both modes need to be used.

10.2 *Language Combinations*—The language combination for each interpreted event shall be clarified beforehand. Some languages will be source languages and some will be target languages. Events shall be staffed with interpreters who are qualified to cover the required language combinations. Relay interpretation shall be used only in exceptional circumstances when interpreters with the required language combinations cannot be found.

10.3 *Choice of Onsite or Remote Interpretation*—Telephone interpreting and videoconferencing are possible alternatives to onsite interpretation (see 11.2.4.5(5), 11.2.4.6(2), 11.3.7.3, and 11.3.12).

10.4 *Special Language and Cultural Considerations*—Dialects and accents that can make comprehension difficult should be identified. Cultural factors that may affect communication should also be considered.

10.5 *Time Considerations*—Consecutive interpretation may take up to twice as long as simultaneous interpretation. However, the consecutive mode also gives participants the opportunity to carefully plan what they are going to say, making communication more efficient.

10.6 *Number of Participants in Need of Interpretation*—The number of participants in need of interpretation will affect the mode of interpretation selected and the use of technology. For example, consecutive interpretation is appropriate for a doctor-patient interview, whereas simultaneous interpretation is preferable for a large, multilingual conference.

10.7 *Interaction Among Participants*—The communication situation may involve one speaker and one listener (one-to-one), one speaker and many listeners (one-to-many), or many speakers and many listeners (many-to-many). Discipline in turn-taking among speakers is essential.

10.8 *Acoustics*—It is important for the interpreter to hear the speaker well. The quality of the interpretation may deteriorate if there are audibility problems, including ambient noise. The speaker and audience may be distracted if the interpreters' voices are overly audible in the room.

10.9 *Visibility*—Signed language interpretation is dependent upon visibility. Nonverbal communication is an essential part of information-content for both spoken and signed languages. Thus, the interpreter should have as much visual input as possible, including an unencumbered view of the speaker, or, in the case of videoconferencing, large screens showing the speaker. Visibility between the interpreter and the deaf consumer is necessary. For this reason, special seating arrangements should be made for the deaf audience.

10.10 *Formality of the Event*—The communication situation varies in degree of formality. Formality ranges from spontaneous informal discourse to carefully planned and organized meetings and highly ritualized, ceremonial events. A clear organizational structure enables the interpreter to anticipate what will happen during an assignment, thus improving the quality of the interpretation.

10.11 *Complexity and Density of Information*—Determine how difficult it is to interpret. The following factors increase information complexity and density and may have a negative impact on the quality of the interpretation:

10.11.1 *Rate of Speech*—Varies from one individual to the next and from one setting to the next. An extremely fast or extremely slow rate of speech is more difficult to interpret.

10.11.2 *Oral Recitation of Written Documents*—Usually increases the rate of speech. Interpreters should be provided with copies of all documents beforehand and the speaker made aware of the potential problems of rapid reading.

10.11.3 *Visual Aids and Prerecorded Videos*—Should be provided to the interpreter as far in advance as possible. The interpreter should have a clear view of the projection screen and be given copies of the projections. At times the speaker may wish to approach the screen, and in such cases should be outfitted with a lapel, lavalier, or roving microphone so that his/her comments are always audible to the interpreter.

10.11.4 *Technical Subject Matter*—Refers to any specialized material that would probably be unfamiliar to most educated listeners outside the particular professional group. Preparation materials and briefings should be made available to the interpreter.

10.12 *Staffing and Scheduling:*

10.12.1 *Staffing Requirements:*

10.12.2 For both simultaneous and consecutive interpretation: two to three interpreters per language pair in each session are needed where interpreting is continuous, depending on the length of the event and the difficulty of the subject matter; for continuously interpreted events under 45 min, one interpreter may be sufficient.

10.12.3 Interpreting is by its very nature a physically and mentally demanding task and places the interpreter under considerable stress. Some assignments may involve emotionally charged content and traumatic situations, which also induce stress. These factors should be taken into consideration when scheduling interpreters. Additional time may be required for a briefing and debriefing.

10.13 *Recording of the Interpretation*—Any recording of the interpretation changes the very nature of the interaction by adding on a future, and perhaps different, use of the interpreter's product. When commercial use of any recording is contemplated, questions of intellectual property rights may be involved. For all of these reasons, all parties involved should be consulted beforehand when a recording of a meeting is being considered.

## 11. Settings

11.1 Interpreters work in a wide variety of settings:

11.2 *Domains:*

11.2.1 *Business and Industry*—A broad range of settings including one-on-one or small business meetings, training and instruction, board meetings, conferences, presentations, sales meetings, plant or factory tours, interviews, negotiations, media events and business phone calls, among others. Interpreting for business and industry may require a range of interpretation skills, from interpreting casual conversation to high-level negotiations and discussions of technology or engineering requiring highly specialized terminology.

11.2.2 *Public Agencies and Institutions*—Interpreting for public agencies has much in common with interpreting in other domains (for example, health-care and law). See corresponding sections for relevant information.

11.2.3 *Health-Care:*

11.2.3.1 *Description*—Interpreting in any setting in which health-care is provided to individuals, including hospitals, clinics, and mental health facilities. These settings may overlap with those from other domains, such as schools, shelters, insurance offices, and legal offices.

11.2.3.2 Typical settings are either acute or nonacute. Acute health-care settings include inpatient services and the emergency room. Inpatient service settings may be intensive care units, labor and delivery and operating rooms. Nonacute health-care settings include community clinics, nursing homes, pharmacies, rehabilitation centers, and home health visits. Clinical settings may involve preventive health-care maintenance and community health-care services, as well as research and teaching facilities.

11.2.3.3 Specific legal and staffing guidelines shall be observed (see August 2000 Guidance Memorandum from the Office For Civil Rights and the 1978 Patients Bill of Rights of the American Hospital Association). To document compliance, the health-care provider should note the use of an interpreter in the patient's chart.

**11.2.3.4 Mode of Interpretation**—Consecutive or simultaneous, either face-to-face or over the telephone (see 11.3.12). Consecutive interpreting is used in most settings. Simultaneous interpreting should be used when it is inappropriate to interrupt a patient communicating in a highly emotional state or when there is no logical transition between ideas, making it difficult for an interpreter to follow the flow of communication. Simultaneous interpretation is used in, but is not limited to, mental health settings, group discussions, and teaching demonstrations.

**11.2.3.5 Assessment of Interpretation Needs:**

(1) A patient/guardian who appears to have limited English proficiency should be asked if he/she wants an interpreter. If interpreting services are refused, but the patient/guardian is judged unable to communicate effectively in English, a qualified interpreter should be provided.

(2) A qualified interpreter should be available at every segment of the patient's health-care experience, providing interpretation either face-to-face or via telephone as appropriate. For example, a patient/guardian requires an interpreter not only for the initial clinic appointment but also for laboratory, radiology, pharmacy and financial services.

**11.2.3.6 Interpreter Qualifications**—The health-care interpreter delivers bidirectional interpretation. Required knowledge of subject matter and vocabulary may be highly specialized and vary widely according to the setting.

(1) A trained health-care interpreter should always be used, rather than family members or friends of the patient/guardian. A minor should never be used as a health-care interpreter.

(2) The interpreter may also be responsible for sight translation of patient instructions, consent forms, or health-care records.

(3) An organization may have health-care providers/health-care professionals who speak the language of the patient/guardian and wish to provide care to the patient without the use of an interpreter. It is recommended that an organization ensure that the health-care provider/health-care professional be linguistically competent. Staff should not interpret unless they have the same qualifications expected of an interpreter.

**11.2.3.7 Responsibilities of Client**—The health-care organization shall ensure that the interpreters providing the service have the knowledge, skills and abilities to accurately convey complex medical information.

(1) All participants in interpreted communications should receive instruction on the effective use of the health-care interpreter and the role and responsibilities of each participant.

(2) On-going training should be provided for in-house interpreters, including periodical monitoring and feedback. If contract interpreters are used, provisions for ongoing training should be included in the contract.

(3) The health-care provider shall provide pertinent information for the interpreter, including name of patient and health-care provider, date, time, language (including dialect), location, if remote or face-to-face, gender preference of interpreter, subject matter, type of encounter, socio-cultural considerations, number of participants, number of interpreters, encounter length, specialized subject matter and/or terminology, and type of equipment needed.

(4) The health-care provider/health-care professional shall also:

(a) Make available written translations of commonly used documents including educational materials, consent forms, and advance directives;

(b) Inform staff of the length and time a trained interpreter is available for the encounter;

(c) Brief the interpreter before the encounter;

(d) Express to the interpreter a preference for mode of interpretation, if any;

(e) Document the presence of the interpreter, or refusal of interpreter services by the patient/guardian, with the interpreter present;

(f) Give the interpreter an opportunity for debriefing, depending on the level of emotional difficulty of the encounter;

(g) Follow up on interpreter concerns with staff and patient/guardian involved in the encounter;

(h) Provide feedback on interpreter performance.

(i) See Checklist for Health-Care Interpreting.

**11.2.3.8 Limitations and Complicating Factors:**

(1) **Written Translations**—Interpreters should not be expected to do written translations other than very brief texts specific to a patient. Translations produced on-the-spot by interpreters cannot be held to the same standards as formally translated texts.

(2) **Patient/Guardian Literacy**—Not all languages have a written form in common use. Literacy may also be limited to a minority of speakers. If the patient's literacy in their preferred spoken language is limited, and a durable record of instructions is needed, audio or video recordings of the oral or signed text should be provided to the patient/guardian. Alternatively, a written translation may need to be read to the patient/guardian by the interpreter in the presence of the provider. It may also be appropriate to provide documents to a patient/guardian in a third language that the patient/guardian can read.

(3) **Cultural Awareness/Sensitivity**—Is the co-responsibility of the health-care provider and interpreter. Special consideration, sometimes requiring consultation between interpreter and health-care provider, should be given to situations involving sensitive medical information, conditions, or outcomes (for example, organ procurement, gender matching, HIV/AIDS, mental health, pharmacy, sex counseling, family planning, and end-of-life issues, among others).



(4) *Visual Aids and Demonstrations*—Are frequently used for instructional purposes. Examples include audio and video tapes used to convey information on diabetes, Lamaze demonstrations, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The health-care provider should inform the interpreter of the nature of the instruction so that the interpreter can determine the most effective mode of interpretation. The interpreter should also be able to attend a session where interpretation is not required in order to become familiar with the format.

(5) *Physical Environment*—Interpreters should be provided the same protective clothing and equipment as other health-care professionals.

(6) *Informed Consent*—The health-care provider is responsible for obtaining informed consent. The interpreter cannot be asked to obtain informed consent and should not be asked to serve as a witness to the actual signed document. Some patients/guardians from other cultures are unfamiliar with this type of agreement and the health-care provider will need to explain the purpose of the form in detail. When consent is obtained with the assistance of an interpreter, the participation of the interpreter should be documented.

(7) *Liability*—The health-care interpreter is a significant member of the health-care team. As such, the interpreter may incur liability for the accuracy of the interpretation.

#### 11.2.4 *Law:*

11.2.4.1 *Description*—Interpreters work primarily in criminal, civil, and administrative law, in courts of general and limited jurisdiction. Proceedings take place in courtrooms, law offices, jails, conference rooms, and public office buildings. Interpreted criminal cases may come under federal or state jurisdiction; civil matters are usually litigated in the state courts; and administrative hearings are conducted in the executive branch of either federal or state government, depending on the agency involved. Legal interpreting can be divided into the following subcategories:

(1) *Trials and Hearings*—Are held in a courtroom or hearing room. Business is conducted in English, and proceedings are interpreted for defendants or respondents who are deaf or who are of limited English proficiency (LEP)—usually a single individual, rarely more than two or three—to allow them to be “legally present.” The parties may be expected to respond to questions during the proceedings. Interpretation may also be required for testimony if a deaf or an LEP witness is questioned by attorneys in front of a judge and/or jury. The setting of the courtroom is very formal, and strict rules of procedure apply. A verbatim record of the proceedings is made, either by audio or videotape or by means of stenography.

(2) *One-on-One Interviews*—May take place between attorney and client, or they may involve pre-trial services personnel, law enforcement agents, investigators, caseworkers, or probation officers who need to obtain information from deaf or LEP suspects, victims, defendants and witnesses. The site of the interview may be an office, a hallway outside the courtroom, the cell block of a courthouse, an interview room in a jail or police station, a hospital room, or a private residence.

(3) *Debriefings*—Are held to obtain cooperation from a criminal defendant, and generally occur in a conference room with a prosecutor, the defendant, and defense counsel present. Law enforcement personnel may be present as well.

(4) *Depositions*—Are part of the discovery process in civil litigation. They take place in a conference room in a law office. One or more litigants are questioned under oath by the opposing attorney, in the presence of their own attorney and a court stenographer.

(5) *Administrative Hearings*—Are held to resolve disputes between claimants or applicants and government agencies. They normally take place in a conference room, often in a government office building. An administrative law judge questions claimants, witnesses, and representatives of the public agency in a relatively informal proceeding, though testimony is given under oath and a verbatim record is kept. There is no jury, and attorneys may or may not participate.

11.2.4.2 *Mode of Interpretation*—During trials and hearings, colloquy in the well of the court is interpreted simultaneously. Spoken testimony on the stand is generally interpreted consecutively and becomes part of the permanent record. Signed testimony on the stand can be interpreted consecutively or simultaneously.

11.2.4.3 *Interpreter Qualifications*—Federal courts and many state courts require that interpreters working in the courts be certified when certification for a given language is available (see Federal Court Interpreters Act). A certified court interpreter is one who has passed an exam in which interpreting skills, knowledge of relevant terminology, and other essential skills and abilities for working in the courts are tested. Interpreters in the legal domain are expected to abide by a code of ethics and shall have a solid grasp of legal terminology and the technical jargon of law enforcement personnel and expert witnesses, as well as a full range of dialect and slang appropriate to the assignment. Interpreters in court proceedings shall be able to interpret simultaneously from English into the deaf/LEP party’s language, and they shall be familiar with courtroom protocol. In all legal settings, interpreters shall be able to interpret consecutively and sight translate written documents both into and out of English. Interpreters shall also understand and be willing to abide by all the tenets of the code of ethics prevailing in the jurisdiction in question.

11.2.4.4 The use of an interpreter should be documented on the case jacket.

#### 11.2.4.5 *Limitations and Complicating Factors:*

(1) *Court Proceedings*—Interpreting is made particularly difficult by the combination of ritualized, predictable yet highly technical language delivered at a fast pace, and unpredictable, spontaneous speech delivered by unsophisticated speakers who are sometimes highly emotional and use a constantly evolving vernacular.

(2) *Witness Testimony*—On the witness stand, a rambling, incoherent, or highly excited witness can pose added difficulties for consecutive interpretation, as testimony interpreted for the record shall be as close to the form and meaning of the original as possible. In contrast, expert witness testimony is highly technical but shall be interpreted completely and accurately in the

simultaneous mode for deaf/LEP defendants. To ensure accurate interpretation of expert witness testimony, interpreters should be provided with documentation in advance in order to research the subject and prepare a glossary of terms. They should also be given an opportunity for a pre-testimony interview with deaf/LEP witnesses. Strict rules of procedure govern witness testimony, which may be interrupted frequently by objections. Given the adversarial nature of court proceedings, the interpreter is often under pressure from opposing sides, adding to the stress of the task.

(3) *Code of Ethics*—It is especially important for interpreters in the legal domain to remain impartial, which is particularly difficult when unsophisticated deaf/LEP defendants and witnesses come into contact with a complex, unfamiliar legal system, often under traumatic circumstances. Judgments of character and credibility are made based on interpreted statements, placing additional pressure on the interpreter to provide a complete and accurate rendition. Bridging cultural gaps becomes necessary in attorney-client and other interviews, but the interpreter shall take care not to become a spokesperson or advocate for either party. The interpreter shall not engage in any communication that falls outside the scope of interpretation and does not occur in the presence of a court officer. Confidentiality is also a critical factor, as the interpreter falls under the umbrella of the attorney-client privilege. In addition, interpreters may be involved in undercover investigations and cooperation agreements between defendants and prosecutors, which require strict secrecy.

(4) *Interpreter as Expert Witness*—The interpreter may be asked to testify as an expert on language issues. The interpreter may also take the stand to certify transcription/translations of recorded conversations. Before being qualified to testify as an expert, the interpreter will be questioned about his or her formal education and credentials. An interpreter who testifies as a witness in a case is precluded from providing interpreting services in that case.

(5) *Telephone Interpreting*—Recommended only for matters of short duration. Given the absence of visual contact, the interpreter does not have the benefit of nonverbal cues in communication and, consequently, shall concentrate much more intensely on the spoken word. Hence, the interpreter may suffer the effects of stress or fatigue sooner than under normal circumstances.

#### 11.2.4.6 *Technological Requirements:*

(1) *Simultaneous Interpretation*—Many courtrooms are equipped with infrared or wired interpreting systems. Alternatively, interpreters may provide their own portable equipment, either wired or wireless. Use of equipment enables the interpreter to provide services for more than one listener, to avoid disruption of court proceedings by maintaining a very low tone of voice, and to obtain optimal positioning in the courtroom to ensure adequate visual and auditory conditions.

(2) *Telephone Interpreting*—Generally, the mode of interpretation is consecutive, although some courts have access to systems enabling simultaneous telephone interpreting. Appropriate telephone equipment should be provided, including conference and speakerphone capability.

#### 11.2.5 *Education:*

11.2.5.1 *Description*—Interpretation is provided in many educational settings. Interpretation is provided in both the public and private sectors (for example, in training seminars, as well as in primary and secondary schools). Typical educational settings include classroom instruction, parent-teacher conferences, counseling, health services, student enrollment, individual educational planning and implementation.

11.2.5.2 *Mode of Interpretation*—Normally, individual interpretation is provided for deaf and hearing-impaired. In the spoken languages, simultaneous interpretation is normally provided for group instruction. Interpretation is normally bidirectional.

11.2.5.3 *Responsibilities of Clients*—Clients shall be aware of legal requirements for provision of interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing (see Americans with Disabilities Act).

11.2.5.4 *Technological Requirements*—Due to the venue and/or interactive nature of group instruction, mobile equipment may be used for simultaneous interpretation.

11.2.5.5 *Limitations and Complicating Factors*—In group instruction, participants should exercise discipline in turn-taking in order to facilitate interpretation. If participants speak at the same time or engage in rapid short exchanges, the interpreter will not be able to interpret everything that is said.

#### 11.3 *Types of Events:*

11.3.1 The type of event is the situation in which communication takes place. The event is defined by factors such as the physical location, number of participants and type of discourse.

11.3.2 A description, the mode of interpretation, interpreter qualifications, responsibilities of clients, responsibilities of providers, and limitations and complicating factors are presented for each type of event if they apply.

#### 11.3.3 *Field Trip:*

11.3.3.1 *Description*—Any setting in which a group, often attending a conference or meeting, visits a site away from the usual meeting venue, or in which a group or delegation travels from site to site. For example, visits to factories, government offices, hospitals, laboratories, research centers, parks, or university facilities.

11.3.3.2 *Responsibilities of Clients*—Specialists going on the field trip may be aware of certain risks unknown to the interpreters (for example, excess sound levels on an airfield). The client shall always inform the interpreter of such risks and provide advice, protection and safety measures generally available to participants. Interpreters shall never be forced to enter a situation that poses a risk to their health and well-being. Insurance and liability issues should be addressed accordingly.

11.3.3.3 *Responsibilities of Providers*—Depending on workload, it may be appropriate to hire extra interpreters. When field trips are part of the work day, they should be included in the contract. The interpreter should be briefed on the particulars in advance.