



INTERPRETER POLICY AND PROCEDURES

2024 MANUAL

Hi!

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Hola!

INFORMATION FOR **INTERPRETERS** WORKING WITH VLP



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Thank you your interest in serving as an interpreter for the Volunteer Lawyers Project. Please read the entire policy and protocol manual. Once you have read the manual, please sign both the Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Code of Conduct and Acknowledgement of Billing Policy and return them to:

Emelia Andres, Pro Bono Manager
Volunteer Lawyers Project
7 Winthrop Square, Floor 2
Boston, MA 02110

if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Emelia Andres at 847-320-6446 or eandres@vlpnet.org.

VLP INTERPRETER INFORMATION SHEET

Please complete the following information for billing purposes. If your contact information changes, please provide the updated information to Emelia Andres at 857-320-6446 or eandres@vlpnet.org

Name _____

Address: _____

Work No. _____

Cell No. _____

Home No. _____

Email: _____

Languages Spoken: _____

Availabilities (Check all that applies):

Mondays Tuesdays Wednesdays Thursdays

Fridays Saturdays Sundays

Morning Hours Afternoon Hours Evening Hours

Comments

TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

Interpreters are required to do the following:

- Read this manual completely
- View the training video on WISP
- Complete a W-9 form
- Sign the Acknowledgments in this manual
- Complete the Interpreter Information Form
- View the Online Interpreter Training
- Complete a Language Proficiency Test

Interpreters are required to attend a yearly training held by the Volunteer Lawyers Project regarding Language Access, the Interpreter's role, and working with LEP clients and volunteer attorneys. You will be notified by email of this training.

Interpreters are required to take an online Language Proficiency Testing. Once this testing is completed, the results will be sent directly to VLP, and we will share them with you.

If you have any questions regarding any information in this manual, please contact Emelia Andres at 857-320-6446 or email her at eandres@vlpnet.org.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Introduction:

Volunteer Lawyers Project relies upon interpreters to ensure accurate and clear communication between clients and VLP staff members, and VLP pro bono panel attorneys.

This Code of Professional Conduct outlines the complexities of the task to be performed and the fundamental ethical principles and standards to be followed by interpreters.

These standards seek to assure meaningful access to legal services for non-English speakers and to increase efficiency, quality, and uniformity in interpreter-client-staff interaction.

These standards define and govern the practice of interpretation as used by VLP in the office space of VLP as well as that of other locations where VLP pro bono panel attorneys may meet with their clients, including the virtual clinics currently scheduled as well as any virtual meetings that may be scheduled with the clients.

➤ VLP Referral: VLP refers cases to panel attorneys who agree to represent clients on a pro bono basis. VLP assigns an interpreter to a client before or at the time when a case is referred. The Interpreter agrees to meet with the client and panel attorney after the case is referred.

Assigning an interpreter: When assigning an interpreter, a VLP case handler will send the Interpreter's contact information to the panel attorney. Then, the panel attorney will contact the Interpreter directly to schedule all client meetings. Please be aware that meetings may be held at the VLP office at 7 Winthrop Square, Floor 2, or another location of the panel attorney's choosing.

1. Accuracy

Each VLP interpreter shall faithfully and accurately interpret what is said without embellishment or omission while preserving the language level of the speaker to the best of said Interpreter's skill and ability. Each Interpreter shall provide the most accurate form of a word in spite of a possible vulgar meaning. An interpreter should not tone down, improve, or edit any statements. An interpreter shall speak in a clear, firm, and well-modulated voice that conveys the inflections, tone, and emotions of the speaker.

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An interpreter shall not simplify statements for a non-English speaker even when the Interpreter believes the non-English speaker cannot understand the speaker's language level. The non-English speaker may request an explanation or simplification, if necessary, through the Interpreter.

2. Impartiality

Each Interpreter shall always maintain an impartial attitude.

3. Confidentiality

Each Interpreter shall guard confidential information and not betray the confidences, which may have been entrusted to him or her by any parties concerned.

4. Modes of Interpreting

VLP prefers either of the following two modes of interpreting:

- the simultaneous mode of interpretation requires the Interpreter to speak contemporaneously with the speaker whose statements are being heard.
- the consecutive mode of interpretation requires the Interpreter to allow the speaker to complete his/her thought or statement before attempting its interpretation.

Whenever possible, the Interpreter shall not summarize statements by a VLP staff member or panel attorney unless requested to do so.

5. Modes of Address

Each Interpreter shall utilize the first person singular when interpreting for a non-english speaker

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6. Language Difficulties

If there is a word, phrase, or concept, which the Interpreter does not understand, the Interpreter should inform the VLP staff member or panel attorney to ensure an explanation, rephrasing, or repetition of the statement.

If the VLP staff member or pro bono panel attorney uses a word, phrase, or concept which the Interpreter finds may confuse the non-English speaker, particularly when a concept has no cultural equivalent in the non-English speaker's language or when it may prove ambiguous in translation, the Interpreter should inform the VLP staff member or panel attorney.

7. Conflicts of Interest

An interpreter shall not serve as an interpreter in any matter where he/she is an associate, friend, or relative or party, of counsel for a client; or when he/she, his/her spouse, or child are a party to any court action involving the client or have a financial interest or any other interest that would be affected by the outcome of the case, or any other interest which would prevent that Interpreter from being impartial. VLP reserves the right to decline the services of any individual interpreter if the client feels uncomfortable with a particular interpreter for any reason.

8. Legal Advice

An interpreter shall not give any legal advice of any kind to anyone, whether solicited or not.

INTERPRETER BILLING POLICY

Rate: Interpreters on the VLP Panel will be paid \$45 per hour with a minimum of two hours for in-person or by video call services. Phone, text, and email interpretation services will be paid on a prorated hourly rate with no minimum payment. Interpreters will enter an estimate of the time spent remotely interpreting on the interpreter timesheet. Parking fees paid by the Interpreter for parking during meetings with the client(s) and attorney(s) will be reimbursed; the Interpreter must provide a receipt to be reimbursed for parking. Written document translation will be paid at \$0.17 per English word. Coordination time between the Interpreter, Client and Attorney will be paid on a prorated hourly rate equaling to .75 cents per minute.

Coordination Includes: texts, emails and calls between interpreter, client and pro bono attorney to set up final meeting between all three parties. If a Zoom meeting or in person meeting lasts less than 2 hours, coordination of such meeting will not be paid in addition to the minimum hourly rate as there is already a minimum pay rate of 2 hours. The interpreter must keep a log of any time that falls under coordination time and provide such log to VLP on a monthly basis along with other required documentation when requesting payment of services.

Late Cancellation: If an appointment with a VLP assigned interpreter is canceled less than 24 hours before a scheduled appointment by either the client or attorney, VLP will pay the Interpreter for one hour of interpretation time. VLP will not pay the two-hour minimum for a late cancellation. A late cancellation payment will not be processed if the Interpreter cancels the appointment. The late cancellation will be verified with either the attorney or client by the Pro Bono Manager via phone, text, email, fax, etc. The late cancellation will be noted on an Interpreter Time Sheet and Payment Request Form when submitting a late cancellation payment.

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Therefore, the Interpreter should always ask the panel attorney where the meeting will be held before contacting the client. The panel attorney should arrange to have the interpreter accompany the client to hearings and/or court proceedings to ensure adequate communications with the client outside of the actual court proceedings. The panel attorney will also make arrangements to have a court assigned interpreter at the hearing for official on the record interpretation.

Billing: Interpreters are responsible for keeping track of their time (whether the interpreting services are provided for remote communication or scheduled meetings) and submitting bills to VLP directly. Please note that the proper procedure for invoice approval is as follows:

- o Send invoice to VLP Staff or Panel Attorney for approval of services rendered. VLP interns are not eligible to approve timesheets. If you are in contact with a VLP intern for a case, you may seek approval from the paralegal assigned to the case.

- o Once approval from VLP Staff or Panel Attorney is received, the Interpreter is responsible for sending the invoice and supporting documents directly to Emelia Andres via email or mail.

Maximum Time: Interpreters are authorized by VLP to work with a panel attorney up to five (5) hours for a single meeting or event without prior approval from a VLP staff member. If the panel attorney plans to exceed the time limit, please contact Emelia Andres at (857) 320-6446 for approval before exceeding the authorized maximum time.

Interpreters should submit timesheets every month. Invoices received more than 30 days after the date of interpretation service may not be paid out.

Send the VLP timesheet to Emelia Andres via email: eandres@vlpnet.org or mail: 7 Winthrop Sq, Floor 2, Boston, MA 02110.

Questions: Should you have any questions about this policy, please contact Emelia Andres at (857)320-6446 or eandres@vlpnet.org.

WORKING WITH LOW-INCOME CLIENTS

Understanding the Context

Interpreters working with the Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) exclusively engage with clients who come from low-income backgrounds. See the [2024 Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) for details. These clients may face numerous challenges that affect their ability to navigate the legal system, including limited access to resources, low literacy levels, and high levels of stress and anxiety. Understanding these factors is crucial for providing effective and compassionate interpretation services.

Demonstrate Empathy: Recognize the difficulties faced by low-income clients and approach each interaction with empathy. Show respect and patience, understanding that legal issues may be particularly daunting for these clients.

Avoid Assumptions: Do not make assumptions about a client's background, knowledge, or experience based on their economic status. Treat each client as an individual with unique circumstances and needs.

Use Simple Language: While accuracy in interpretation is paramount, aim to use clear and straightforward language when possible. Ensure that complex legal terms and concepts are explained in an understandable way, if requested.

Pace of Communication: Be mindful of the pace at which you speak. Allow time for the client to process information and ask questions. If necessary, provide breaks during longer sessions to prevent clients from becoming overwhelmed.

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Clarification and Support: Encourage clients to seek clarification if they do not understand something. Be supportive and patient, providing explanations as needed without simplifying the original message.

Maintain Respect: Always address clients with respect and courtesy. Avoid using patronizing language or tone and be mindful of cultural sensitivities that may affect communication.

Confidentiality: Reiterate the importance of confidentiality to clients, assuring them that their information will be kept private. This can help build trust and encourage open communication.

Cultural Awareness: Be aware of and sensitive to cultural differences that may affect communication and understanding. Familiarize yourself with the cultural backgrounds of the clients you serve to provide more effective interpretation.

Cultural Humility: Approach each interaction with cultural humility, acknowledging and respecting cultural differences without imposing your own cultural norms.

Coordination: Work closely with VLP staff and pro bono panel attorneys to ensure that clients' needs are met effectively. Share any relevant observations that may help legal staff better understand the client's situation.

Advocacy: While maintaining impartiality, be an advocate for clear communication. Ensure that the client's voice is heard and that they fully understand their legal situation and options.

INTERPRETER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF INTERPRETER CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT:

I _____ (print your name)
accept the above code of conduct and agree to abide by it.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

INTERPRETER ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF BILLING POLICY:

I _____ (print your name)
have read the VLP Interpreter Billing Policy, and I agree to
abide by this policy to the best of my ability.

Signature: _____

Date: _____



INTERPRETER TIME SHEET

Interpreter Full Name: _____

Interpreter Signature: _____

Total Hours: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE NOTE THAT A VLP STAFF MEMBER OR PANEL ATTORNEY MUST INITIAL THE TIME SHEET IN THE SPACE ALLOTTED.
All timesheets must be submitted on a monthly basis. Timesheets submitted 30 days after the date of first entry may not be paid out. If you have any questions, please contact Emelia Andres: (857) 320-6446 or email at: eandres@vlpnet.org

| Date | Start and End Time | Client Name | Language | Length of Appt. | Attorney/VLP Case Handler | Attorney Initials | Location (Circle one) |
|------|--------------------|-------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---|
| | | | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLP Office • Court • Attorney's office • Phone • Zoom/Virtual |
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