

GENERAL TIPS

IMPORTANT NOTE: This document provides general tips to judges and judiciary staff on working with remote interpreters in virtual courtrooms, both spoken and sign language.¹ Be sure to also read specific tips for [Judges](#), [Hosts/Moderators](#), and [Interpreters](#).



TIPS for Spoken and Sign Language Remote Interpreting for the Various Platforms

1. All participants in virtual court events should to the extent possible:
 - a. Use headphones with a microphone (noise cancelling preferred) and **avoid speakerphone**.
 - b. Make sure all devices are plugged in and/or fully charged.
 - c. Use a hardwired ethernet connection to a router whenever possible.
 - d. Remain stationary and avoid walking or moving around while connected to the virtual court event.
 - e. Be familiar with how to MUTE and un-mute microphones to minimize noise interference when not speaking.
 - f. If relying on Wi-Fi, be situated in the same room as the internet router.
 - g. Adjust audio settings in video conferencing platform to ensure microphone detection.
2. Judges should provide instruction to parties on how the process will work and participants in the courtroom adhere to them. (See the [Remote Interpreting Bench Card](#).)
3. Court Interpreter(s) should be provided as much contextual information as possible about the case in advance, including type of proceeding, number of participants, names, and their respective roles.
4. Court Interpreters can be used when needed for brief attorney/client communication in virtual court events. Zoom has a “break-out” room feature; however, for the other platforms, SCOPIA and TEAMS, the only known alternative is to excuse the attorney and client for a few minutes so they can confer on a separate line or another space where remote interpretation can occur.
5. **Plan Ahead.** [Hosts/Moderators](#) of all virtual platforms should:
 - a. confirm with LEP court users what technology they will use (i.e. platform, listening equipment, type of internet connection);

¹ These tips are based on the Judiciary’s Language Access Plan (LAP). Directive #01-17, Standard 1.8 [Use of Remote Interpreting](#), Appendix 9 [Operational Standards for Telephone Interpreting](#), and Standard 2.6. Video Remote Interpreting May be Appropriate in Limited Circumstances, as well as best practices from *Fundamentals of Court Interpretation: Theory, Policy, and Practice*, 2012 Victoria Felice Vazquez, Holly Mikkelsen)

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- b. schedule device/technology testing prior to the virtual court event with all participants including the LEP and interpreter/s; and
- c. ensure that all parties have the relevant Meeting ID numbers and/or passwords required to access the virtual courtroom at the scheduled time.



Spoken Language Remote Interpreting (Telephone and Video)

Telephone

6. Telephone interpreting is provided only in the consecutive interpreting mode, where only one person can speak at a time.
7. It is of utmost importance and absolutely necessary for all participants to cooperate by pausing to permit interpretation at the end of sentences or at logical breaks in thought.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

8. Video participation allows interpreters to SEE attendees and BE SEEN, which results in better remote interpreting services. For example, the interpreter can provide visual cues to report any communication issues.
9. Participants should be reminded to remain on screen facing the camera.
10. Video remote interpreting (VRI) may be possible in all three interpreting modes (consecutive, simultaneous, and sight) depending on available technology and in coordination with the Vicinage Coordinator of Interpreting Services (VCIS) and/or staff Interpreters.



Sign Language Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

11. **Appropriate screen set up for sign language interpreters and deaf court users is critical.** Currently, MS TEAMS cannot be used for sign language VRI and Zoom may be possible when ASL staff interpreters determined it is appropriate. SCOPIA is the optimal platform for sign language interpreting services especially if the deaf person is in jail, since the virtual courtroom moderator adjust all participant screen views as needed to ensure effective communication. For example, the moderator must set the size of and lock down screen views so the interpreters/defendant views are optimal and do not change when a new person speaks. See existing [SCOPIA guidance](#).
12. For most deaf court users, unless in jail, case management staff working along staff ASL interpreters must determine the device of the deaf court user and arrange for testing the litigant's devices with sign language interpreters to ensure an efficient virtual courtroom event.