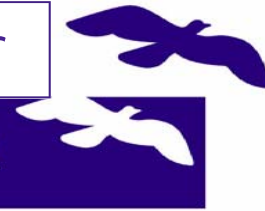


The Language Interpreter Center

Alaska Immigration Justice Project

Winter
2010

Issue 3



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Planting Seeds for Growth

By Holly Mikkelson
Adjunct Associate Professor, Graduate School
of Translation and Interpretation,
Monterey Institute of International Studies

The interpreting profession in Alaska continues to make great strides, thanks to the valiant efforts of the Language Interpreter Center and the contributions of individual interpreters. In early August, I returned to Anchorage for my sixth visit to present another round of workshops for professionals in the legal and social services fields who work with interpreters, and for interpreters themselves. I repeated the Introduction to Interpreting workshop, which was attended by prospective interpreters in a wide variety of languages with different levels of experience. Then, I gave a language-specific workshop for Spanish interpreters who have passed the written court certification exam and are preparing for the oral certification exam. At the end of the day, we were joined by interpreters of Russian, Korean and Cantonese who are also planning to take the oral court certification

exam. I also repeated the court interpreting workshop that we gave last year, which featured a visit to a courtroom to learn more about the daily work of court interpreters.

The workshops on working with interpreters were attended by lawyers and public assistance case workers, who asked searching questions and gained perspective on how difficult and complex interpreting is.

Developing a cadre of professional interpreters who are fully qualified (i.e. certified) to perform this difficult task in a variety of settings is a long, difficult process. In December, the Language Interpreter Center, in collaboration with the Alaska Court System, will administer for the first time in Alaska the National Court Consortium certification exam. This is a huge step forward on the path to offering a fine group of qualified community interpreters to serve Alaska's diverse population. Hats off to everyone who is working so hard to achieve that goal!



Collaborative Community Effort

By Barb Jacobs
Program Manager of the
Language Interpreter Center



The Language Interpreter Center (LIC) is embarking on its fourth year. The program goals of the LIC are three-fold: to provide quality interpreter training to bilingual Alaskans; to provide training to professionals on the ethics of working with interpreters; and to be the link between anyone needing an interpreter and a trained interpreter. The LIC is dedicated to ensuring that all Alaskans receive access to the critical services. Qualified interpreters are essential.

In the past three years, the LIC has trained over 140 interpreters in 39 languages on interpreter skills and ethics,

and educated more than 900 professionals on the ethics, roles and responsibilities of working with interpreters. Thanks to the generous efforts of our stakeholders, we have sponsored seven interpreter training series with classes including Introduction to Interpreting, Working with Interpreters, Language Specific Training, and Court and Medical Interpreter Training. Medical, legal, and social service providers partner with the LIC to offer monthly continuing education classes for LIC interpreters, so that they can learn the terminology specific vocabulary essential to communication.

In October, we facilitated a week-long medical interpreter training in

Dillingham in partnership with the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The LIC also is dedicated to providing workforce development opportunities to bilingual Alaskans. The LIC currently provides interpreter services to 150 agencies and businesses in Alaska, including legal, medical, academic and social services. Since December 2009, the number of interpreter appointments we fill each month has doubled. We are also receiving increased requests for our translation services from clients nationwide.

A handful of organizations in the community of Anchorage came together to found Language Interpreter Center. We are grateful to their vision and generosity as we work together to ensure that all Alaskans have access to services.

“Meaningful Access”

By Hannah Torkelson
Americorps VISTA for the
Language Interpreter Center



August 2010 marked the 10th Anniversary of the president signing the Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." The order requires that all agencies receiving federal funds comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and provide Limited English Proficient (LEP) members of their communities with "meaningful access" to the services they provide. Title VI prohibits discrimination based on "race, color, and national origin." To make services available to people who do not speak English proficiently, federally funded agencies are mandated to provide free oral interpretation services, written translations, and other language access services.

On August 16, 2010, Assistant Attorney General Thomas Perez wrote a letter to the state court chief justices and administrators to provide greater clarity about their obligation to the LEP population. The Department of Justice letter offers

examples of situations where courts must provide language services, emphasizing that courts must provide these services at all stages of the judicial process, to all LEP individuals involved in the proceeding, and free of charge to the LEPs.

In addition to the court system, many medical, academic, and social service organizations also receive federal funds and, therefore, are also mandated to make their services accessible to people with limited English. Federally funded service providers are encouraged to develop a written plan detailing how they intend to provide appropriate, timely, and cost-effective language assistance. As the Department of Justice letter acknowledges, it does take time to create a system that ensures language access to those who need it and to build a pool of qualified interpreters. The letter serves as an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come in the ten years since Executive Order 13166 was issued and a reminder to the whole community that we share the responsibilities of Title VI.

Interpreters Speak

Participates in Holly Mikkelson's Introduction to Interpreting Workshop in August 2010 offered the following anonymous reflections:

"Before I thought that being proficient in both languages made me a good interpreter and that being proficient in both languages, I should make sure that both parties understand each other. I thought that it was my responsibility to paraphrase and facilitate understanding. Before I got into this training, I thought that it was a very easy and simple undertaking and I found out that it is not. I am very grateful to be included in this training. Thank you so much to all the people behind all of this."

"Having this training session has made the role of an interpreter clearer. I had previously thought that an interpreter just translates what one person is saying in one language and explains it to another person in the other language. It is much more complex."

Languages Currently Available

All our interpreters are screened for language proficiency, complete a 3-day Introduction to Interpreting Training, pass an ethics test, and go through a background check.

Albanian	Amharic	Arabic	Bosnian
Cebuano	Cantonese	Croatian	Czech
Danish	Farisi	French	German
Gujarati	Hindi	Hmong	Inupiaq
Ilocano	Japanese	Korean	Lao
Nepali	Nuer	Malaysian	Mandarin
Portuguese	Samoan	Serbian	Slovak
Somali	Spanish	Swahili	Tagalog
Thai	Russian	Ukrainian	
Vietnamese		Yup'ik	

Lend a Hand: Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)



The Language Interpreter Center offers one VISTA internship position each year. My name is Hannah Torkelson, and I took the VISTA position in December of 2009. I am assisting the Language Interpreter Center to more efficiently meet the needs of Limited English Proficient Alaskans and the agencies tasked with providing them services and information. Since I began, the number of requests for interpreter services that the LIC receives each month has doubled. If you are interested in lending a hand, as a VISTA, an intern, or community volunteer please email, fax, or send your resume and schedule of availability to the LIC.

Thank you Sponsors!

