

Code of Professional Ethics
And Protocol for Official Court Interpreters
United States District Court
For the District of Puerto Rico

The Canons contained in this Code of Professional Ethics and Protocol for Official Court Interpreters working for the United States District Court in Puerto Rico are based on the *Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility* proposed by the Federal Court Interpreters Advisory Board to the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the *Code of Ethics* of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and Translators, the *Professional Guidelines* of the Office of Interpreter Services for the Circuit Court of Cook County, and the California Court Interpreters Association *Code of Ethics*.

Interpreters working on a contract basis with the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico are to abide by this Code whenever their services are required in this District.

-
- Canon 1** Official Court Interpreters act strictly in the interests of the court they serve.
- Canon 2** Official Court Interpreters reflect proper court decorum, and act with dignity and respect to the officials and staff of the court.
- Canon 3** Official Court Interpreters shall avoid professional or personal conduct that could discredit the court.
- Canon 4** Official Court Interpreters, except upon a court order, shall not disclose any information of a confidential nature about court cases or any related matter, obtained during the performance of their official duties.
- Canon 5** Official Court Interpreters fulfill a special duty to interpret accurately and faithfully, without indicating any personal bias, avoiding even the appearance of partiality.
- Canon 6** Official Court Interpreters shall refrain from giving advice of any kind to any party or individual; from expressing a personal opinion in a matter before the court; and from making any referrals.
- Canon 7** Official Court Interpreters shall refrain from speaking to any representative of the news media, while in the performance of his or her official duties, and avoid any appearance of impropriety at all times when approached by a representative of the news media.

- Canon 8** Official Court Interpreters shall maintain their neutrality by avoiding undue contact with attorneys, except as strictly necessary to prepare adequately for their assignments.
- Canon 9** Official Court Interpreters shall refrain from undue contact with any witnesses without the presence of the attorney who summoned said witness.
- Canon 10** Official Court Interpreters shall avoid any contact with jurors who are actively serving on a matter before the court, unless otherwise ordered by the Court.
- Canon 11** Official Court Interpreters shall refrain from speaking directly to defendants and their families without the presence of the attorney representing said defendant, and then only to address a specific interpreting issue related to his or her official duties.
- Canon 12** Official Court Interpreters shall not accept any remuneration, gifts, gratuities, special favors, services, or other valuable considerations from any of the parties in a matter for which they have been called upon to perform their official duties. Likewise, Official Court Interpreters shall not offer money or other items of value to any of the parties, including witnesses, or relatives of the parties in any matter pending before the court. Official Court Interpreters shall avoid all conflicts of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest at all times. Should a conflict or potential conflict of interest arise in a case for which the interpreter has been called upon to act in his or her official capacity, the interpreter must immediately notify the presiding judicial officer.
- Canon 13** Official Court Interpreters shall not use any information obtained in the course of their official duties, access to court records, facilities, or privileges, for their own personal gain, or for another person's gain.
- Canon 14** Official Court Interpreters shall work unobtrusively, performing to the best of their abilities to assist the court in providing due process to all parties; correcting any errors in their interpretation when they become or are made aware of such errors; requesting clarification when statements to be interpreted are unclear, ambiguous, or contain terms unfamiliar to the Official Court Interpreter.

- Canon 15** Official Court Interpreters shall, to the extent practicable, support each other by sharing their knowledge and expertise, working as a team in protracted proceedings to avoid mental fatigue and maintain the highest quality standards in their performance, and shall bring to the court's attention any factor or condition that may adversely affect their ability to perform in accordance with their oath.
- Canon 16** Official Court Interpreters are officers of the court sworn to interpret fully and accurately everything that is said during a proceeding, without omissions or embellishments; faithfully maintaining the proper language level; refraining from characterizing the testimony of a witness; using the first person singular when interpreting for a witness or defendant, and the third person singular when referring to him or herself on the record; using the consecutive mode for all questions-and-answers exchanged with a non-English speaker, and the simultaneous mode for all other colloquies. As officers of the court, Official Court Interpreters are also bound by the *Judicial Employees' Code of Conduct* and *Local Rule 83.7 of the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico* (Court Proceedings Release of information).
- Canon 17** Official Court Interpreters have a duty to continually maintain and upgrade the skills and knowledge required to perform their official duties.
- Canon 18** Official Court Interpreters shall willingly accept and agree to be bound by this Code, and understand that appropriate sanctions may be imposed by the court for willful violations.

Approved: 8/29/02