

# NCSC Interpreter Database Tier Classifications

## Spoken Languages

### Database Classifications for Court Interpreters in Languages for Which NCSC Oral Examinations Are Available

Tier 1

- Federally certified court interpreters  
OR
- Interpreters who have:  
NCSC Oral Examination scores (obtained in one test cycle) as follows:
  - A minimum score of 80% in simultaneous interpreting;
  - A minimum score of 80% in consecutive interpreting; and
  - A minimum score of 75% on each sight translation part with a minimum combined sight translation score of 80%.

Tier 2

- NCSC Oral Examination scores (obtained within a 12 month period) as follows:
  - A minimum score of 70% in simultaneous interpreting;
  - A minimum score of 70% in consecutive interpreting; and
  - A minimum score of 65% on each sight translation part with a minimum combined sight translation score of 70%.

### Tier 3

- NCSC Oral Examination scores (obtained in one test cycle) as follows:
  - A minimum score of 60% in simultaneous interpreting;
  - A minimum score of 60% in consecutive interpreting; and
  - A minimum score of 55% on each sight translation part, with a minimum combined sight translation score of 60%.

### Untiered – NCSC Oral Examination Languages

- State-certified interpreters in languages for which NCSC Oral Examinations are available who do not qualify for Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 database classifications.
- Generally includes court interpreters whose credentials, do not meet the specifications for the tier classifications as outlined above, such as:
  - Court interpreters credentialed in states that do not use the NCSC Oral Examinations.
  - Court interpreters credentialed in states that did not use the NCSC Oral Examinations at the time the interpreter was credentialed.
  - Court interpreters who are credentialed using NCSC Oral Examinations, however, state test administration processes differ from the requirements outlined in the tier classifications listed above.

## Database Classifications for Court Interpreters in Languages for Which *No NCSC Oral Examinations Are Available*

Tier A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) scores in the non-English language of at least “12” for Alta Language Services or “Superior” for Language Testing International (LTI);</li><li>• NCSC Written Examination minimum score of 80%; and</li><li>• Completion of a State Court Interpreters’ Orientation (from any state).</li></ul>
Untiered - No NCSC Oral Examination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Includes interpreters for languages for which no oral examination is available by NCSC or FCICE, and specific requirements for Tier A have not been met.</li></ul>

### DEFINITIONS

#### Explanation of the Tier System:

- **Tiers 1, 2, & 3:** Database tiers for spoken-language court interpreters who are federally certified, or who interpret in a language for which an abbreviated or full NCSC Oral Examination is available and have achieved the minimum required scores on the NCSC Oral Examination per the tier classifications listed above.
- **Untiered Interpreter:** The classification of Untiered applies to interpreters who do not or cannot qualify for Tiers 1, 2, 3 or A. This may include interpreters with certifications in states that do not use the NCSC Oral Examination, or did not use the NCSC Oral Examination at the time the interpreter was certified or interpreters in languages for which no NCSC Oral Examination exists and who do not meet the requirements of Tier A.
- **Tier A:** Database tier for interpreters who interpret in a language for which no NCSC Oral Examination exists, but for which an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is available from ALTA Language Services or Language Testing International (LTI).

## **Explanation of Examinations, Test Administration Practices, and Credentialing Terms:**

**Certification:** Status conferred upon an individual by a state confirming that the individual has attained and continues to maintain the highest credentials offered to court interpreters within the jurisdiction. In addition to passing the written and oral interpreting examinations, certification processes typically include completion of initial and ongoing training or continuing education and compliance with a code of ethics. Certification status is not available in all languages.

**FCICE:** The Federal Court Interpreter Certification Examination (FCICE) is a two-phase examination process which includes a Spanish/English Written Examination and a Spanish/English Oral Examination. To pass these exams, individuals must score a minimum of 75% of both parts (English and Spanish) of the Written Examination and score 80% or higher on the Oral Examination. Individuals who pass both phases of this examination process are federally certified by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts (AOUSC). Federal certification is currently available only in Spanish/English; previously, federal certification existed for Spanish, Navajo, and Haitian Creole.

**NCSC Oral Examination:** An abbreviated or full oral court interpreting examination<sup>1</sup> maintained by the National Center for State Courts.

### **NCSC Oral Examination Components:**

- **Simultaneous Interpreting**
- **Consecutive Interpreting**
- **Sight Translation:** This portion of the NCSC oral examination is comprised of two separate sub-parts, the sight translation of an English-language document into the non-English language and sight translation of a non-English language document into English.

**NCSC Written Examination:** A multiple-choice English examination consisting of 135 questions. The Written Examination measures knowledge of English language, court-related terms and usage, and ethics and professional conduct.

**One Test Cycle:** An oral examination administered in full during a one-hour period on the same day.

**Incremental Pass System:** The process whereby a test candidate passes sections of the oral examination incrementally, either because of a bifurcated test administration (with oral examination sections administered in phases) or because the candidate is permitted to retake only

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<sup>1</sup> The full examination includes sight translation (two portions), consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting. The abbreviated examination includes simultaneous interpreting and a test of English speaking skills.

those portions of the oral examination s/he did not pass rather than taking the entire oral examination again.

**Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI):** An assessment process structured as a conversation between the tester and test taker. The examination measures certain skills of an individual's language proficiency level in the language being tested. It does not measure interpreting skills.

**State Court Interpreters' Orientation:** Initial training and/or information provided to court interpreters in a state or US territory. Orientation sessions may include an overview of court interpreter ethics and professional conduct, legal terminology, and exposure to modes of interpreting.

# National Proficiency Designations for Interpreters: American Sign Language

Tier 1

- RID Certification
  - SC:L (Hearing)
  - CLIP-R (Deaf)

Tier 2

- RID Certification:
  - NIC; CSC; CI/CT; NAD IV or V (Hearing)
  - CDI (Deaf)

## DEFINITIONS

**RID** = Registry of Interpreters for Deaf; this organization is the entity that tests and certifies sign language interpreters. Most all of the states recognize certification offered by RID.

### Specialist Certification

**SC:L** = Special Certificate: Legal; this certification is considered a specialist certification offered to hearing interpreters who seek to interpret in court settings.

**CLIP-R** = Conditional Legal Interpreting Permit-Relay; this certification is considered a specialist certification offered to interpreters who are Deaf seeking to interpret in court settings.

### Generalist Certification

**NIC** = National Interpreter Certification; this certification is the primary generalist certification that all sign language interpreters obtain currently. Throughout RID's history, the organization offered different tests and levels of certification that are still recognized as valid even though the tests may no longer be offered (see below):

**CSC** = Comprehensive Skills Certificate; this certification is a fully recognized certification from RID but the test is no longer offered.

**CI/CT** = Certificate of Interpreting/Certificate of Transliteration; this certification is a fully recognized certification from RID but the test is no longer offered.

**NAD IV or V** = National Association of the Deaf; NAD used to offer their own testing separate from RID. In the early to mid-2000s, RID and NAD merged their testing process and now only RID tests and certifies sign interpreters. NAD no longer certifies sign interpreters

**CDI** = Certified Deaf Interpreter; this certification is offered to interpreters who are Deaf.