

RID Research Grant Update

Margaret Cobb, CSC, SC:L, California; Tracy Clark, CSC, SC:L, California

Call for Participants Superior Court of California, Ventura County Research Project

“An Observational Study of the Current Practices of Deaf Interpreters in Five Courtroom Locations Across the United States”

The research team for this project, funded by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, is seeking interested participants. The goal of the project is to gather data, through observation, on the practices of Deaf/Hearing Interpreter teams working in courtrooms across the United States. We are looking for geographic diversity. Because court cases are often continued or resolved at the last minute, identifying cases appropriate for observations is challenging. Therefore, if you are a DI or an HI who has had legal training, works in the court, regularly works in DI/HI teams and would like to participate in this study, please contact us. ALL participant information will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you are interested, the research team is prepared to contact the appropriate court personnel in your area to arrange for observations.

Please contact Tracy Clark and/or Margaret Cobb at aslcourts@ventura.courts.ca.gov or by phone at 805-662-6689 (V).

The Superior Court of California, Ventura County, was the 2007-2008 recipient of the RID Research Grant. In March 2008, an award letter was sent to the court advising them of a \$12,661 award to fund a project titled, “An Observational Study of the Current Practices of Deaf Interpreters in Five Courtroom Locations Across the United States.” The research team includes Margaret Cobb, Tracy Clark and Lisa Gonzales, Legal Deaf Interpreter.

The goal of this project is to observe court deaf interpreter (DI)/hearing interpreter (HI) work and to begin collecting data on the interpreting and communication strategies that are being utilized in this setting. The findings of this study should help our field analyze the tasks, contribute to training, inform legislation and support the work of DIs in the courtroom.

The following are the key activities undertaken so far in this project:

1. Collaboration with the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC). The Legal Interpreter and Deaf Interpreter Work Groups of the NCIEC graciously offered to work with the Ventura Court in designing an observational protocol to be used in this study. With financial support from these two work groups, and the guidance of the NCIEC Effective Practices Team consultant Kirk Vandersall, Managing Director of Arroyo Research Associates, a development meeting was held in the Los Angeles, CA, area in the late spring of 2008. In addition to the research team, NCIEC sponsored the participation of Dr. Patrick Boudreault, Professor of Deaf Studies at California State University, Northridge, and Jimmy Beldon, CDI, faculty member in the Four Year ASL/ITP Program at the College of St. Catherine’s in St. Paul, MN. The result of this meeting was a draft of the observational protocol. After multiple reviews and revisions, the final version of the observational protocol has been completed and is now ready for use.

In addition, several other documents were developed as part of the study protocol, including letters of introduction to court personnel, letters of introduction to participant interpreters who will be observed and guidelines for data collection.

2. Identification of Participating Courts and Interpreters

The research team has been working to identify six to eight jurisdictions that regularly use DI/HI interpreting teams in courtroom settings and has been working with agencies and court administrators to identify courtroom proceedings appropriate for observation. In some jurisdictions, this process involves the approval of “in-house” research councils or committees in order to gain access for the purposes of observation and study. The response has been very positive. Administrators and DI/HI teams in six states are now working with the team.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

The team looks forward to beginning observations in early 2009. Data will be collected over a period of several months. The team has received an offer of assistance with data analysis from the NCIEC. ■