

Iowa Interpreter Program Summary Iowa Division of Latino Affairs

Under the authority of Iowa Code section 216A.16, the Iowa Division of Latino Affairs/Human Rights Department adopted a new Chapter 2 “Qualification of Language Interpreters.”

The interpreter program’s goal is to develop a mechanism for establishing a process to qualify Spanish/English interpreters for general and specialized interpretation. A reliable training and testing process will be established to serve individuals working in and with health, court and social services. It will provide standards and a code of ethics, develop an evaluation system and develop an interpreter qualification system that is replicable and expandable into other languages. Through the development of the mechanism for establishing qualifications for Spanish/English interpreters an available statewide roster of qualified professional interpreters will be created. The program will also encourage interpreters in Iowa to become nationally certified, where such certification exists.

As a prerequisite to entrance into the Qualified General Interpreters Training Program (QGITP), interpreters in Iowa will have to be at least 18 years of age, pass a criminal background check, have a high school diploma or its equivalent, and be bilingual in English and Spanish. The candidates must then pass an approved language proficiency test as well as completing the QGITP (150 contact hours) in order to be called a Qualified General Interpreter.

For entry into the Qualified Specialization Interpreters Training Program, a candidate must be a Qualified General Interpreter in good standing and complete a specialized 80-hour training program in their specific field of interest: healthcare interpreting, judicial interpreting, or social service interpreting. IDLA’s goal is to institutionalize at the state level the curricula that will be developed and/or offered through independent training institutions chosen and vetted by IDLA.

In order to maintain either qualified status, a candidate must show 30 contact hours of training every five years and maintain him- or herself in good standing regarding the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct for Interpreters.

IDLA will also grant the certificate of “qualified general and specialized interpreters” to those who meet the criteria of transferability.

An Approved Training Agency must be able to demonstrate:

- Language competency
- Cultural competency
- Interpretation methodology

- Professionalism and etiquette
- Interpreter self-evaluative assessment tools and techniques
- Overview of state and national interpreter certification and credentialing requirements
- Idioms, slang, and linguistic development
- Expertise in the specialization interpretation

IDLA hopes that the resulting screening and training paradigm can then be used as a framework to develop qualification for interpreters of other languages.

Qualification in Iowa will be voluntary for the general interpretation and the three specializations. However, it is hoped that interpreters who make it onto the statewide roster of Qualified Spanish Interpreters of IDLA will be given preference in contracting and hiring.

IDLA expects to start with the training program in the third quarter of 2006, right after Approved Training Agencies have been accredited to provide the training.