

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 28, 2015

SAN FRANCISCO SUPERIOR COURT EXPANDS INTERPRETER SERVICES IN CIVIL CASES

SAN FRANCISCO -- Effective immediately, the San Francisco Superior Court is expanding the case types for which interpreters will be made available in accordance with a new state law that authorizes the Court to provide interpreters to civil litigants who do not proficiently speak or understand the English language, Court Executive Officer T. Michael Yuen announced today.

Parties involved in Criminal, Traffic, Juvenile, Civil or Family cases may request the services of an interpreter from the Clerk's office or the courtroom clerk. If an interpreter is not available at the time of the hearing, the Court may continue the case until an interpreter can be assigned. Parties should request an interpreter when filing a motion or response.

[AB 1657](#) requires interpreters to be provided in any civil action or proceeding at no cost to the parties, regardless of income. The law would require interpreters to be provided in accordance with a specified order of priority until sufficient funds are appropriated to provide an interpreter for civil litigants who need an interpreter. Before the Governor signed AB 1657 into state law on Sept. 28, 2014, state law generally required civil litigants to pay court interpreter fees to the Court. However, the law also required the Court to waive the interpreter fees for civil litigants for a party who needs an interpreter and "appears in forma pauperis."

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Interpreters shall be assigned based on priority of case and resources available.

The new state law establishes the following priority order of civil cases for which interpreters must be provided for every party that meets the standard of eligibility:

(1) Actions and proceedings under Division 10 (commencing with Section 6200) of the Family Code, actions or proceedings under the Uniform Parentage Act [Part 3 (commencing with Section 7600) of Division 12 of the Family Code] in which a protective order has been granted or is being sought pursuant to Section 6221 of the Family Code, and actions and proceedings for dissolution or nullity of marriage or legal separation of the parties in which a protective order has been granted or is being sought pursuant to Section 6221 of the Family Code; actions and proceedings under subdivision (w) of Section 527.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure; and actions and proceedings for physical abuse or neglect under the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act [Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 15600) of Part 3 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.]

(2) Actions and proceedings relating to an unlawful detainer.

(3) Actions and proceedings to terminate parental rights.

(4) Actions and proceedings related to conservatorships or guardianship, including the appointment or termination of a probate guardian or conservator.

(5) Actions and proceedings by a parent to obtain sole legal or physical custody of a child or rights to visitation.

(6) All other actions and proceedings under Section 527.6 of the Code of Civil Procedure or the Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act [Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 15600) of Part 3 of Division 9 of the Welfare and Institutions Code).

(7) All other actions and proceedings related to Family Law.

(8) All other civil actions or proceedings.

If funds are not available to provide an interpreter to every party that meets the standard

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of eligibility, preference shall be given to parties proceeding in forma pauperis pursuant to Section 68631 of the Government Code in any civil action or proceeding outlined in paragraph (3), (4), (5), (6), (7), or (8) of subdivision (b).

The California Constitution requires that a person unable to understand English charged with a crime has the right to an interpreter throughout the proceedings.

The San Francisco Superior Court's Interpreter Unit offers interpreting services from Court employees and independent contractors proficient in nearly every language. The unit has 19 employees and about 60 independent contractors. Spanish is the most frequently used language, followed by Cantonese, Mandarin and Vietnamese. Other widely used languages include Russian, Tagalog, Arabic and Korean.

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