

# UNITED STATES COURT INTERPRETER COMPENSATION DATABASE

## Chapter 1, Contents and User Guide

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## Contents of the Database

These documents constitute the raw data collected for the most comprehensive description ever completed of how staff and contract interpreters in spoken languages are compensated in the courts of the United States. These data have been posted so that court managers, interpreters, and anyone else who has an interest in the subject can benefit from the research right away without having to wait for the authors to finish their analysis of the data and publish their findings.

The purpose of the study is to create the most complete benchmark possible regarding official structures of compensation in place at a specific period of time: **July-December 2013**. It is not based on sampling but on as many jurisdictions as possible.

By “official structures of compensation” we mean two things:

- The compensation practices for **staff interpreters**, including job titles, salary ranges, hours of work, and fringe benefits. We identified every court we could locate that employed one or more staff interpreters.
- The compensation practices for **contract interpreters** for professional services and, where applicable, reimbursement of expenses. We contacted every state administrative office of the courts, plus the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, to document whether they had such policies and, if so, the provisions of such policies. Most other levels of courts that were found to have staff interpreters were also asked about policies for contract interpreters.

The data are organized by the nation’s five levels of courts, plus a separate chapter for Florida:

- Chapter 2, the Federal courts (Administrative Office of the United States Courts [AOUSC] and the U.S. District Courts),
- Chapter 3, state administrative offices of the courts (including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) and, where applicable, state trial courts
- Chapter 4, the Superior Court of California,
- Chapter 5, county courts,
- Chapter 6, city/municipal courts; and
- Chapter 7, Florida courts (except as described in Chapters 3 and 5).

### Users’ Guide: How to Read the Pages of Data

Each chapter is organized alphabetically by jurisdiction. Where appropriate, the location of courthouses where staff interpreters are housed is also identified in parentheses under the jurisdiction’s name. Note that the chapters are in pdf format and may be word-searched using the “CTRL-F” function on a PC or the “Command-F” function on a MAC.

For most jurisdictions there are two main sections of data. The upper portion of each page contains data about any court employee position that includes interpreting duties, which

includes *staff interpreters as well as managers and supervisors of interpreters who themselves interpret*: a statement that there are no staff interpreters in the jurisdiction, or the following information where there is at least one staff interpreter:

- the official job title(s)
- where applicable, the designation of positions as part time or as dual titles
- the salary range with the minimum and, if applicable, maximum of the range
- the number of hours in the official work week
- data for fringe benefits

In addition, if the jurisdiction has posted a *job description* on its web site, the URL for the job description is provided in a footnote.

The bottom portion of the page reports findings for *contract interpreters*: a statement that the jurisdiction has no policy, or as much of the following information from such policy as will fit on the balance of the page:

- rates of compensation for professional services
- information about cancellation policies, if any
- any of the following:
  - whether mileage is reimbursed and, if so, at what rate
  - payment for travel time
  - reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenditures

Chapter 2, which provides data from the Federal Judiciary, does not include anything for contract interpreters in the U.S. District Courts since the AOUSC has promulgated a policy reported on the first page that those courts follow.

All sources from which data were collected are identified in footnotes for each jurisdiction.

The following designations are found throughout the volumes and their definitions are provided:

- “Not available”—Either the respondent did not know the information and therefore could not provide it, or no information regarding the variable could be found on a court’s web site when no court official could be identified to contact or no court official responded.
- “Not provided”—The data element was requested but was not provided.
- “Not requested”—The data element was not requested. As the data collection phase wound down in early 2014, some variables were not requested in order to expedite the conclusion of the data collection phase by making it easier for respondents to provide data only for variables deemed to be more important.

## Data Collection Process

Most respondents were contacted via e-mail and a few via regular mail. Follow-up communications ensued when additional information or clarification was needed. A uniform format was used to create a page of data for each jurisdiction.

If no reply was received after several weeks, a follow-up contact was initiated by e-mail and/or telephone. Toward the end of the data collection phase, in order to increase the representation of courts with staff interpreters who had not replied, the following variables were not sought: fringe for employees and all variables relating to contract interpreters. If a jurisdiction did not provide all the information requested, we reported as much as we were able to obtain.

Most of the data collected was provided by respondents who were employees of the courts. However, some of the data was retrieved from courts' web sites. Verification that such data were still current and accurate was sought from each court, but several could not be contacted or were not responsive.

The degree to which courts were accessible varied considerably. Some courts--notably those at the county and municipal levels in Arizona--had helpful web sites with extensive classification and compensation information posted for all employees. By contrast, some web sites in other jurisdictions did not even provide telephone numbers or e-mail addresses that would make it possible to contact their staff—and some that posted telephone numbers never answered any of numerous calls made to them.

## CORRECTIONS AND UPDATES

- **Corrections:** Readers are invited to notify the authors of any **errors** in the database by writing to [robertjoelee@aol.com](mailto:robertjoelee@aol.com).
- **Updates:** In order to respond to user demand, we have added a feature to this endeavor that permits courts to provide information about developments regarding interpreter compensation that occur on or after January 1, 2014. Updates complementing the point-in-time database may be found in the Supplement, which will be updated periodically. Representatives of courts who wish to provide updates may submit them to [robertjoelee@aol.com](mailto:robertjoelee@aol.com).