



ACCESS TO JUSTICE
Maryland Administrative Office of the Courts

LANGUAGE SERVICES IN THE MARYLAND COURTS

FISCAL YEAR 2024



mdcourts.gov/accesstojustice

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LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Providing high quality language services is central to the Maryland Judiciary’s mission to provide fair, effective, and efficient justice for all. To support this goal, the Maryland Judiciary provides a broad range of resources to ensure access to the courts regardless of a person’s primary language or national origin. To ensure all Marylanders can participate fully in the justice system, the Maryland Judiciary is continually designing better ways to deliver court language services. This year, Access to Justice launched several technology-related projects to leverage its ability to effectively serve court users whose primary language is not English. Some of these program innovations will permit the Judiciary to use public resources more effectively and efficiently. Others enhance its ability to provide high quality language services in a complex legal environment. All form part of a broad spectrum of resources that permit us to support our courts in serving the public.

THE COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM

The Maryland Judiciary’s Court Interpreter Program provides qualified and certified foreign language and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for in-person interpretation of court proceedings and court-related events. The program also fields and responds to requests for other accommodations for persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing by providing Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDI), Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) services, or other resources upon request.

STAFF INTERPRETERS

Some Maryland courts have employed full-time staff interpreters. These interpreters are available for all courtroom proceedings and can also serve outside the courtroom when available. Currently, all court-employed staff interpreters are certified Spanish interpreters.

TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Clerk’s offices, commissioners, court help centers, and other court personnel have access to a Language Line account to provide on-demand telephonic interpretation for interactions either in-person or on the phone. Telephonic interpretation is not generally used for courtroom proceedings where in-person interpretation is preferred and recommended.

VIDEO INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN COURTROOMS

The Court Interpreter Program continues to actively support the use of video remote interpreters (VRI) in court proceedings deemed appropriate for VRI. The court may permit one or more participants or all participants to join the hearing remotely. Whether it is a hybrid or a full remote hearing, spoken language and ASL interpreters can be easily connected to the courtroom to provide interpretation services.

ON-DEMAND REMOTE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES

When deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals appear at clerk's counters, commissioner stations, or court help centers, they also need an immediate way to communicate. Access to Justice provides courts and court-based services, such as court help centers, access to an account and software for on-demand remote ASL services through videoconferencing.

BILINGUAL STAFF

The Maryland Judiciary has a diverse staff with individuals from a broad range of cultures, nations, and experiences. In fiscal year 2023, the Judiciary launched the bilingual staff program to make the best use of its multilingual work force by defining how individuals who are fluent in a language other than English can assist the courts to better serve the public.

TRANSLATED COURT FORMS

Court Interpreter Program staff oversee a large translation program to render court forms in an interlineated format into Chinese, French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. As new forms are developed or old ones revised, Access to Justice manages the translation of those documents. Translated court forms can be accessed in [court forms](#) on the Judiciary website.

LANGUAGE PORTALS

The Judiciary maintains [welcome pages](#) in Chinese, French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. These pages provide additional instructions on navigating the Judiciary's website. The welcome pages also provide links to relevant forms and materials on how to work with court interpreters.

COURT HELP VIDEOS

Access to Justice maintains a variety of [court help videos](#) on various legal topics to help the public navigate the courts. Several videos explain how to request an interpreter in spoken and ASL languages and how to work with them in the courtroom. These videos are also available in Chinese, French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish.

MONTHLY Q&A SESSIONS FOR REGISTRY INTERPRETERS

Since December 2021, the Court Interpreter Program staff has been conducting monthly informational sessions for court interpreters. During Q&A meetings, registry interpreters are encouraged to ask questions about the program and interpreter policies.

AYUDA LANGUAGE BANK

In fiscal year 2024, Access to Justice renewed its grant to Ayuda, a legal non-profit organization to provide interpreter and translation services to civil legal aid organizations in Maryland. Under this grant, Ayuda provides interpreter services to civil legal aid organizations in Maryland.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Access to Justice Court Interpreter Program regularly participates in activities aimed at promoting information about the Judiciary language access services to various stakeholders and communities that may not be aware of the availability of these services.

In fiscal year 2024, the Court Interpreter Program staff presented at the Maryland State Bar Association Legal Summit on June 6, 2024, in Ocean City, MD. Additionally, staff provided a resource table at the Annual Maryland Crime Victims' Rights Conference in April and at the Judiciary's Child Adolescence and Delinquency Options conference in October of 2024. Staff regularly presents at various judicial conferences and events to disseminate information about language access services.

RECENT INITIATIVES

The Maryland Judiciary has undertaken several initiatives during fiscal year 2024 to enhance its ability to respond efficiently and effectively to the needs of persons with limited English proficiency.

BILINGUAL STAFF

In July 2023, the Judiciary inaugurated a pilot program in Montgomery County, offering the following courts the opportunity to create qualified bilingual positions in Spanish for either existing bilingual employees, or by reclassifying vacant positions and recruiting for the language skill:

- **Montgomery County District Court:** Rockville and Silver Spring locations: six (6) qualified bilingual positions.
- **Montgomery County Circuit Court:** twelve (12) qualified bilingual positions.

The pilot program was evaluated and analyzed to determine the impact on court operations and court user experience. The results of the bilingual staff, their supervisors, and surveys of Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals show that the objectives of the bilingual staff program are being achieved. Evidence of the effectiveness of the bilingual staff program was also seen in the overall perception of the program by bilingual employees, their supervisors, and LEP users. These positive findings provide support for expansion of the bilingual employee program to other jurisdictions of the District Court and circuit courts.

COURT HELP VIDEOS

During fiscal year 2024, Access to Justice created a series of six videos to provide the public with some tips for participating in a remote court hearings on Zoom. Part four of the series provides guidelines on how to use an interpreter during a remote court hearing, such as how and when to use the Interpretation feature in Zoom and what to do if participants connect to the hearing in Zoom by dialing in. Part four was produced with on-camera native speakers in English, French, Chinese, Russian, Korean, and Spanish. The videos are available at <https://www.courts.state.md.us/video/courthelp/remote-hearings-interpreter>



FIGURE 1. REMOTE HEARINGS PART 4. HOW TO WORK WITH A COURT INTERPRETER ON ZOOM

Additionally, Access to Justice is in the process of creating a series of five videos for judges and magistrates on best practices when working with court interpreters:

- Conducting Interpreted Proceedings
- Preparing for an Interpreted Proceeding
- Team Interpreters in Trials and Lengthy Hearings
- Working with Video Remote Interpreters
- Relay Interpretation

Each video in the series will be approximately five minutes in length and address a specific topic related to courtroom interpretation. The series is expected to be released in late 2024 or early 2025.



FIGURE 2. FILMING JUDGES' VIDEOS ON LOCATION AT THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR HOWARD COUNTY

COURT STAFF TRAININGS

In fiscal year 2024, the Court Interpreter Program conducted two webinars for court staff titled *How to Assist Limited English Proficient and Hard of Hearing Customers*. With the Court Interpreter Program staff and an ASL subject matter expert as guides, court staff discovered best practices to use when assisting deaf and limited English proficient customers and learned how to identify accessibility tools and language access resources offered by the Maryland Judiciary.

NEW CERTIFICATION TESTING POLICY

To ensure the Judiciary provides high quality interpretation services, in fiscal year 2024 the Court Interpreter Program implemented a new testing policy for qualified interpreters in the languages where certification exams are available.

Effective January 1, 2024, interpreters must obtain a minimum 55% score on each portion of the exam and a 55% overall score to remain on the Registry as a “qualified” interpreter. Interpreters who obtain less than 55% on each portion of the exam or less than 55% overall are removed from the Registry. Interpreters who have met the minimum 55% score requirement on each portion of the exam and overall score may remain on the Registry as “qualified” interpreters for another two years during which they may take the certification exam again every six months.

Interpreters must pass the certification exam by the end of the four-year period. If an interpreter does not pass the certification exam during the time allotted or exhausts the number of attempts at the same version of the exam, they are removed from the registry.

COURT INTERPRETER DAY - FIRST WEDNESDAY IN MAY

In April of 2024, Chief Justice Fader designated the first Wednesday in May as “Court Interpreter Day” in the state of Maryland in acknowledgement of the significance of interpretation services and to express gratitude to interpreters for their dedication and professionalism in ensuring access to justice for all.

CHANGES TO RULE 1-333, COURT INTERPRETERS

At the open meeting of the Supreme Court of Maryland on October 9, 2024, the court considered proposed amendments to Interpreter Rule 1-333. The court ultimately adopted the bulk of the proposed amendments to Rule 1-333 and remanded subsection (c)(4)(A). One of the adopted amendments states that simultaneous interpretation is not part of the record and, therefore, not required to be recorded. The rule also authorizes participants and the court to switch to consecutive interpretation if it is determined that an interpretation should be recorded. The adopted amendment allows the Court Interpreter Program to proceed with further expansion of the hybrid video remote interpreting program in the Maryland courts. The adopted changes will take effect on January 1, 2025.

COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM

The Court Interpreter program focuses on providing the Judiciary and Marylanders who seek court services with a variety of language access tools. One of them is the provision of highly qualified court interpreters for all court proceedings and court-related services. To accomplish this, the program recruits, tests, and trains qualified bilingual individuals to prepare them to serve as court interpreters.

REGISTRY

The Maryland Court Interpreter Program maintains a Registry of certified and qualified interpreters allowed to serve as freelance court-appointed interpreters in the Maryland courts. The Registry currently includes 475 interpreters in 76 languages. Interpreters must fulfill continuing education, program participation, and certification requirements to remain on the Registry. They must also sign an acknowledgement agreeing to comply with program policies and to act in accordance with the Canons of the Maryland Code of Conduct for Court Interpreters.

WORKSHOP & EXAMINATIONS

Prospective interpreters have two opportunities a year to participate in programs and workshops designed to help them become qualified to serve on the Registry. In addition, interpreters who speak a language for which an examination is available may sit for certification exams. The following events are generally offered twice a year:

- Introductory Webinar
- Court Interpreter Written Exam
- Language Proficiency Interviews
- Orientation Webinar

Mandatory Training on ZOOM and ScheduleInterpreter
Oral Examination Preparation Workshop
Certification Examinations

In fiscal year 2024, 127 candidates were accepted into the program. Twenty-three (23) interpreters have fulfilled all the testing and training requirements and were placed on the Court Interpreter Registry in the following languages: Amharic, Azerbaijani, Dari, Farsi, French, Wolof, German, Japanese, Pashto, Patois, Portuguese, Spanish, Tigrigna, Turkish, Twi, and Urdu.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Registry interpreters are required to accumulate 16 continuing education hours every two years. Program staff keep track of individual interpreter compliance and send reminders to all Registry interpreters well in advance. The Court Interpreter Program has offered free of charge continuing education classes and webinars to all Registry interpreters to help them earn the required continuing education credits. Table 1 reflects the courses provided during the year and the number of attendees for each program.

TABLE 1. INTERPRETER CONTINUING EDUCATION CLASSES - FY24

CLASS NAME	PARTICIPANTS
Medical Examiner Terminology for Court Interpreters	48
Skills Building for Court Interpreters (Spanish)	13
Civil Claims Part 1: Construction-Related Claims (Spanish)	16
Court Interpreter Ethics (Continued)	44
Sight Translation Skills in Family Law	21
Ethical Dilemmas for Court Interpreters	49
Written Exam Preparation Webinar	29
Stress Management and Vicarious Trauma for Staff	17
Certification Exam Preparation Workshop	52
Listening and Memory. Part 1 and 2	125
Simultaneous Interpretation Techniques	25
Consecutive Interpretation Techniques	10
Listening and Memory	13
Taking it to the Next Level	72
Adapting to Target Listener	58
TOTAL STUDENTS	592

CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Court Interpreter Program offers certification exams twice a year in 15 languages. The exam tests the interpreter's skills in sight translation, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation.

In fiscal year 2024, twelve (12) interpreters passed the certification exams and became certified in the following languages: Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish.

The Maryland Judiciary maintains a public listing of Maryland court certified and qualified interpreters who have given permission for their name, e-mail address, and phone numbers to be released to users of interpretation services outside of the Maryland Judiciary.

The Court Interpreter Program actively recruits interpreter candidates in all languages and grants reciprocity to out-of-state certified interpreters for onsite and video-remote proceedings on a case-by-case basis.

Individuals interested in information on how to become listed on the Maryland Judiciary Court Interpreter Registry can visit the website at:

<https://www.courts.state.md.us/interpreter>

RELEASE LIST

Individuals looking for an interpreter for a private assignment outside of the Maryland Judiciary can check the [Judiciary Interpreter Public Listing](#) to see if there are interpreters listed under the requested language. The Administrative Office of the Courts is not responsible for any interaction between the interpreter and outside agencies or companies.

PROGRAM USE

CIRCUIT COURTS USAGE

In fiscal year 2024, the circuit courts assigned Registry interpreters for 10,113 assignments in 75 languages. This data does not include staff interpreter assignments. Additionally, one assignment may include multiple court events. Historically, the circuit courts for Montgomery, Prince Georges, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Frederick, and Anne Arundel counties have the highest use of interpreters.

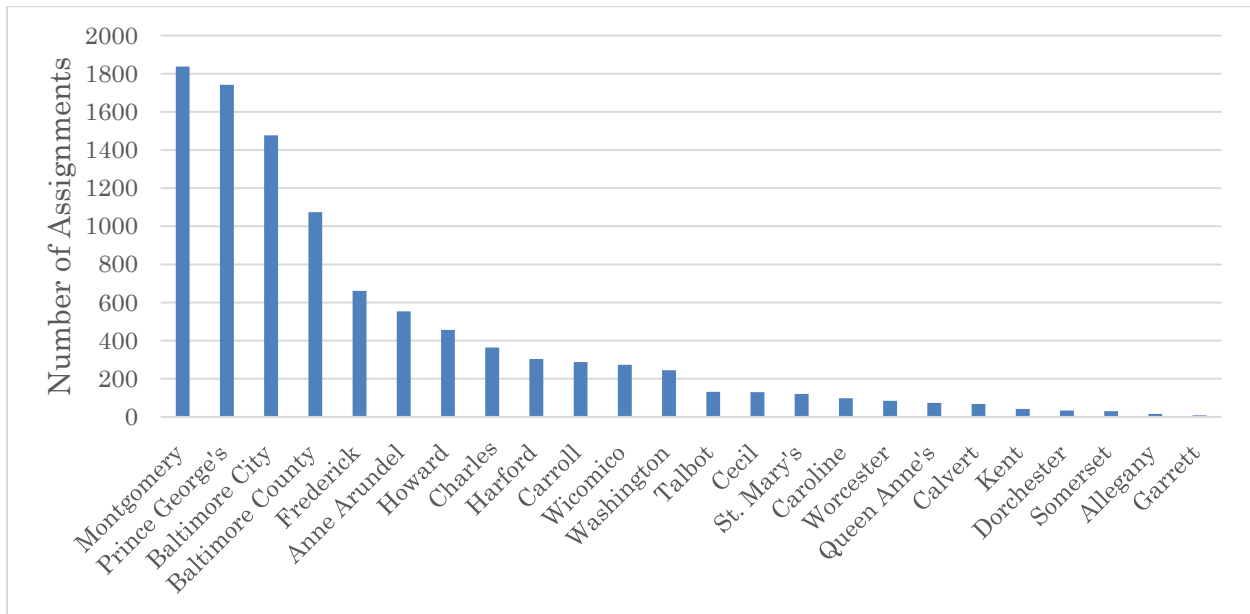


FIGURE 3. CIRCUIT COURTS - INTERPRETER ASSIGNMENTS BY JURISDICTION - FY24

As in previous years, the most requested languages in fiscal year 2024 were Spanish, ASL, Amharic, Arabic, French, and Mandarin.

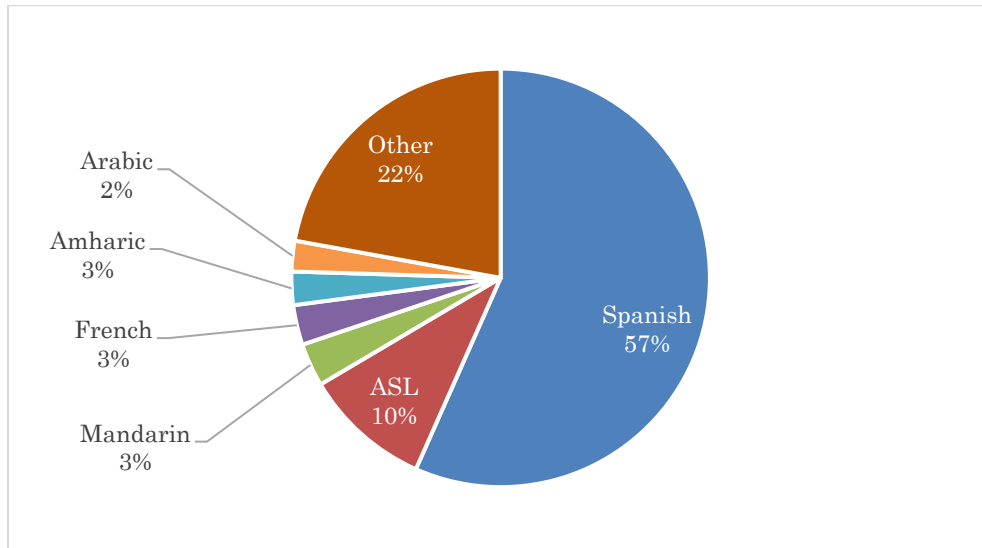


FIGURE 4. CIRCUIT COURTS – ASSIGNMENTS BY LANGUAGE - FY24

The number of interpreter assignments in Spanish decreased slightly from 60% in fiscal year 2023 (6,325) to 58% (5,867 assignments) in fiscal year 2024. This decrease may be attributed to the Standby Feature in the Judiciary scheduling system, ScheduleInterpreter, which allows the courts to identify and assign interpreters who are already “on the clock.”

American Sign Language (ASL) continues to be the second most requested language in the Maryland courts with 1,021 assignments in fiscal year 2024.

Maryland remains a linguistically diverse state. Although approximately half of all services are provided in Spanish (with additional services in Spanish provided by staff interpreters), many jurisdictions provide interpreters in 20 or 30 languages. Montgomery County remains the most linguistically diverse circuit court jurisdiction; that court provided in-person interpreters in 75 distinct languages during fiscal year 2024.

In fiscal year 2024, several jurisdictions made use of readers and visual interpreter services available to them through the scheduling platform, ScheduleInterpreter. Individuals with visual impairments may need assistance with written materials, including court documents. They may also need a professional visual interpreter who will describe visual evidence. In fiscal year 2024, courts assigned readers or visual interpreters for 21 assignments. There were no requests for readers or visual interpreters in fiscal year 2023.

When assigning visual interpreters or readers, courts follow the Guidelines for Readers and Scribes and Tips for Readers and Visual Interpreters.

Circuit courts provide a range of [court-ordered or court-referred services](#). Persons with limited English are provided in-person interpreters for these events. In fiscal year 2024, the circuit courts assigned interpreters for 326 court-referred services.

TABLE 2. COURT INTERPRETER EVENT TYPES - CIRCUIT COURTS - FY24

EVENT TYPE	EVENTS	PERCENT
Court-Referred Service	326	3%
Courtroom Proceeding	9,231	92%
Juror	553	5%
Other	3	0%
Total	10,113	100%

Rule 1-333 requires courts to appoint certified interpreters when possible to provide the highest quality service to courts and those with limited English. For some languages, where no certification examination is administered, the courts will rely on qualified interpreters. Judiciary policy permits courts to assign qualified interpreters on the Registry when no certified interpreter is available.

In fiscal year 2024, circuit courts appointed certified interpreters 58% of the time, a slight increase from 57% in fiscal year 2023.

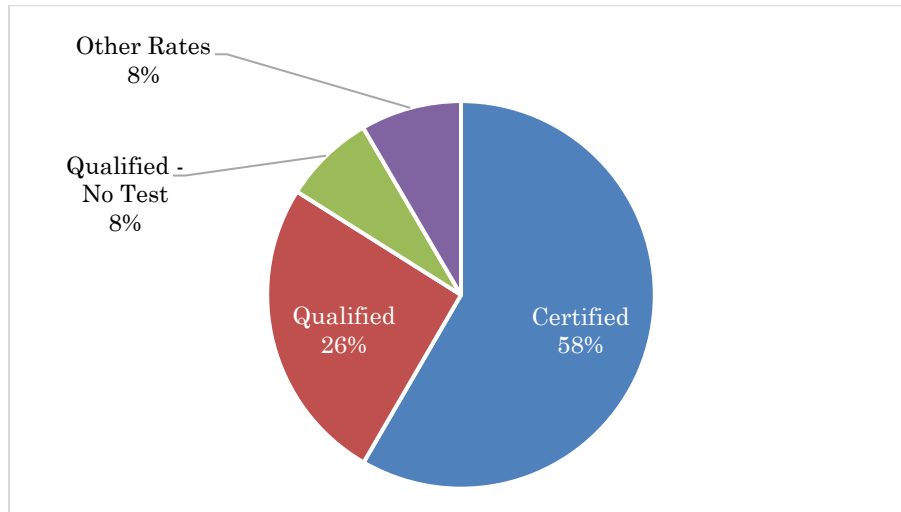


FIGURE 5. CIRCUIT COURTS - ASSIGNMENTS BY INTERPRETER QUALIFICATION - FY24

Court interpreters are provided in a full range of circuit court case types.

TABLE 3. COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM CASE TYPE - CIRCUIT COURTS - FY24

CASE TYPE	ASSIGNMENTS	PERCENT
Civil - Family	5,717	57%
Civil - Non-Family	600	6%
Criminal	2037	20%
Juvenile	919	9%
Traffic	3	0%
Unassigned	837	8%
Total	10,113	100%

DISTRICT COURT USAGE

In fiscal year 2024, the District Court assigned interpreters to 9,277 assignments, which represents a 5% increase from fiscal year 2023 when interpreters were assigned to 8,854 assignments. Again, the data does not include the services of staff interpreters. Additionally, each assignment, especially in Spanish, may cover several court events. The District Court in Baltimore County continues to represent the highest use of freelance interpreters with 1,436 assignments in fiscal year 2024.

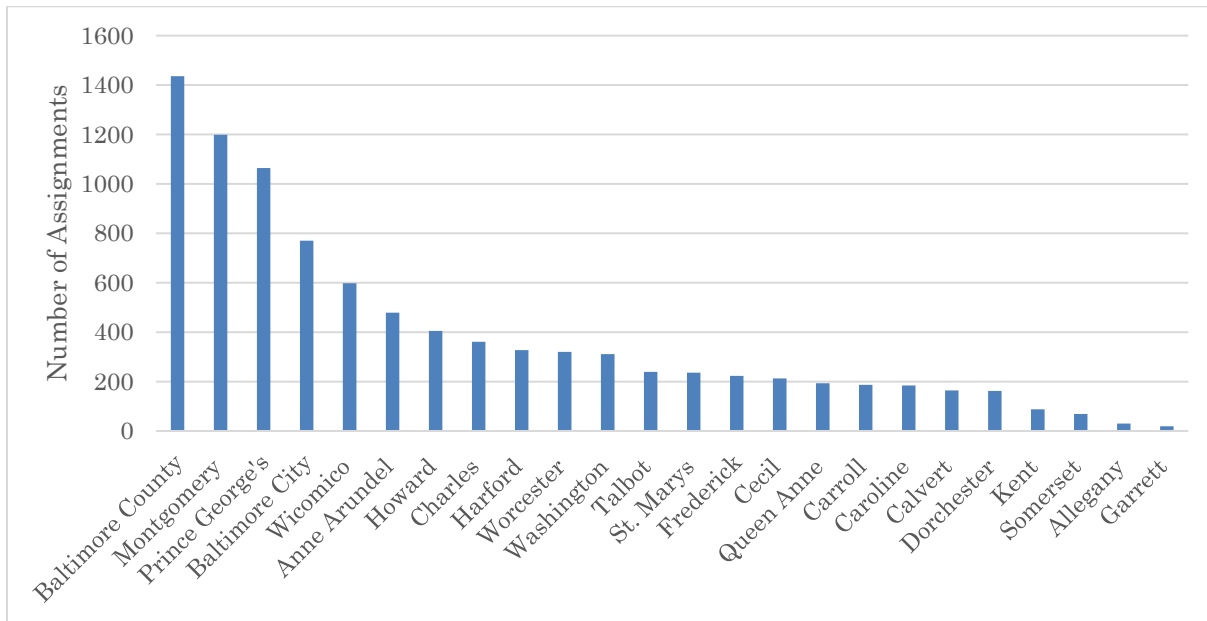


FIGURE 6. DISTRICT COURT – DISTRICT COURT INTERPRETER ASSIGNMENTS BY JURISDICTION - FY24

As in circuit courts, the demand for in-person interpreters is highest for Spanish, which represents 58% of all assignments in District Court locations.

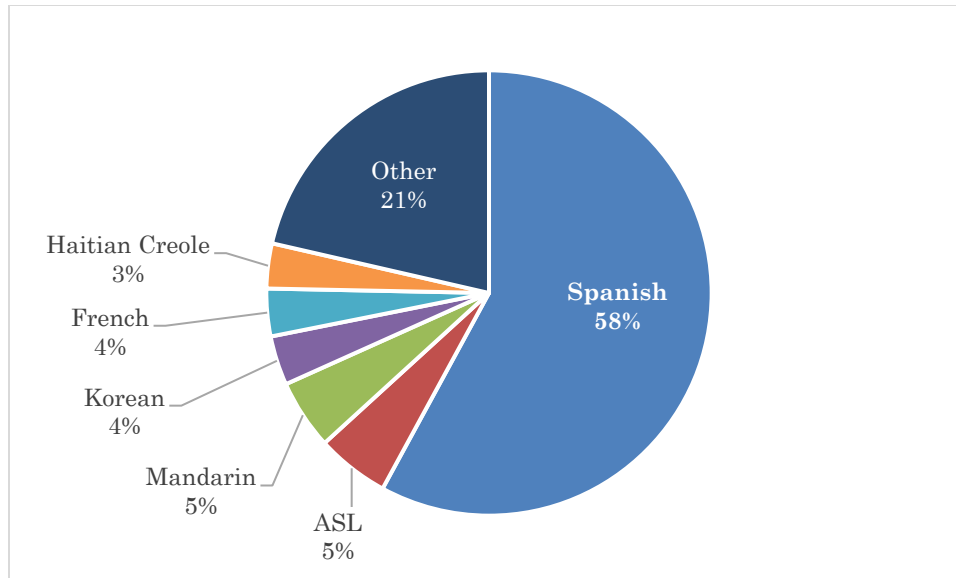


FIGURE 7. DISTRICT COURT – DISTRICT COURT INTERPRETER ASSIGNMENTS BY LANGUAGE - FY24

District Court interpreter usage also reflects unique local populations. In fiscal year 2024, the Court Interpreter Program recruited and provided interpreters in the following indigenous languages: Akateko, K'ekchi, K'iche, Ixil, Mixteco, Quechua, Mam, and Tzotzil. Indigenous language interpreters may be paired with a certified Spanish interpreter. The first interpreter interprets from the indigenous language into Spanish, and then the Spanish interpreter relays that into English. The sequence is reversed when English is being spoken. This is called relay interpretation.

In fiscal year 2024, the number of courtroom proceedings where interpreters were provided has increased by 5% from the prior year. It should be noted that the number of requests for in-person ASL interpreters by commissioners continues to decline due to the availability of on-demand video remote ASL services. The data below includes the commissioners’ use of ASL in-person interpreters only in fiscal year 2024.

TABLE 4. COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM EVENT TYPES - DISTRICT COURT - FY24

EVENT TYPE	EVENTS	PERCENT
Commissioner	2	0%
Court Referred Service	27	0%
Courtroom Proceeding	9,246	100%
Other	2	0%
Total	9,277	100%

In fiscal year 2024, the District Court was able to secure certified interpreters for 75% of district court interpreter assignments.

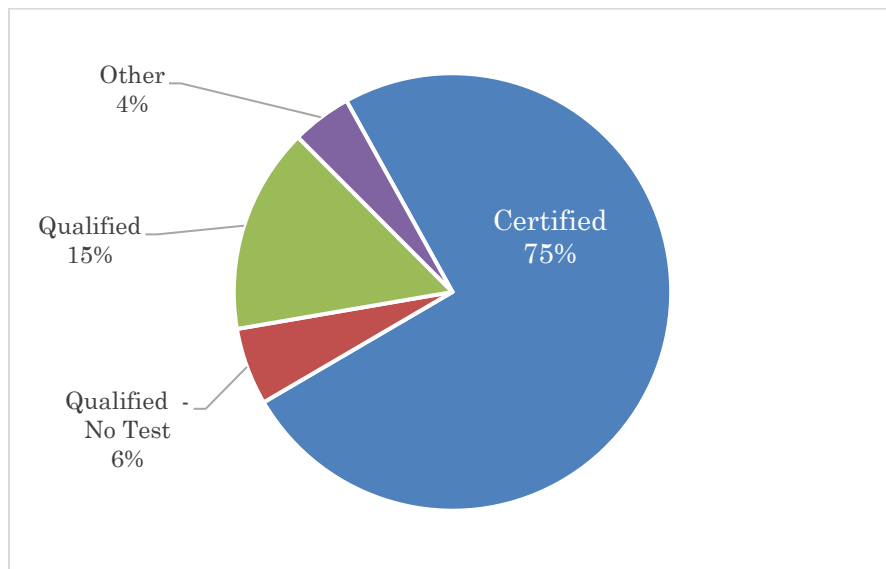


FIGURE 8. DISTRICT COURT ASSIGNMENTS BY INTERPRETER QUALIFICATION - FY24

Court interpreters are provided in a full range of District Court case types.

TABLE 5. COURT INTERPRETER PROGRAM CASE TYPES - DISTRICT COURTS - FY24

CASE TYPE	EVENTS	PERCENT
Civil - Family	506	5%
Civil - Non-Family	1, 982	21%
Criminal	2, 358	25%
Juvenile	4	0%
Traffic	3,891	42%

STAFF INTERPRETERS

The Maryland Judiciary employs thirty-four (34) Spanish-speaking staff interpreters. These full-time employees are available to interpret on-demand for court proceedings, court-related services, and between court staff and Spanish-speaking court users. Seventeen (17) staff interpreters serve in District Court locations; seventeen (17) serve in circuit courts. There have been no new staff interpreter positions added since last year.

TABLE 6. STAFF INTERPRETERS (SPANISH) IN MARYLAND COURTS - FY24

DISTRICT COURT	CIRCUIT COURT
Anne Arundel (2)	Anne Arundel (2)
Baltimore City (3)	Baltimore City (2)
Baltimore County (1)	Baltimore County (2)
Howard (1)	Frederick (1)
Montgomery (5)	Howard (1)
Prince George's (5)	Montgomery (6)
	Prince George's (3)

Staff interpreters can also assist local courts in planning for local language needs, promoting information and awareness about court language services, and building relationships with the Spanish-speaking community.

TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION SERVICES

The Maryland Judiciary contracts with Language Line, a telephonic interpretation vendor, to provide phone-based interpreter services in all languages. Access to Justice staff provide Language Line posters and desk reference cards, as well as ongoing support and training in how to use telephonic interpretation services. Telephonic interpretation is not generally available for in-court proceedings when in-person interpretation services are recommended and preferred.

TABLE 7. TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION EVENTS - FY24

PROGRAM USER	FY2023	FY2024	PERCENT INCREASE
Circuit Courts	4,048	6,894	70%
District Court - Commissioners	11,944	17,197	44%
District Court - Clerks	3,853	4,664	21%
Maryland Court Help Centers	5,846	6,751	15%
Total Number of Events	25,691	35,506	38%

In fiscal year 2024, the number of instances when Language Line interpretation services were provided increased 38%, most notably in the circuit courts.

CIRCUIT COURTS

In fiscal year 2024, the circuit courts' use of telephonic interpretation increased by 70%. The Circuit Courts for Montgomery County, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Howard County reported the highest increase in the demand for telephonic interpretation services. In fiscal year 2024, the Court Interpreter Program staff have increasingly assisted the courts in obtaining new Language Line phones and support materials to promote the use of this service in clerk's offices and other public service areas in courts. Additionally, the Program staff regularly presents the information about the availability of Language Line telephonic interpretation at various court staff trainings and judicial conferences.

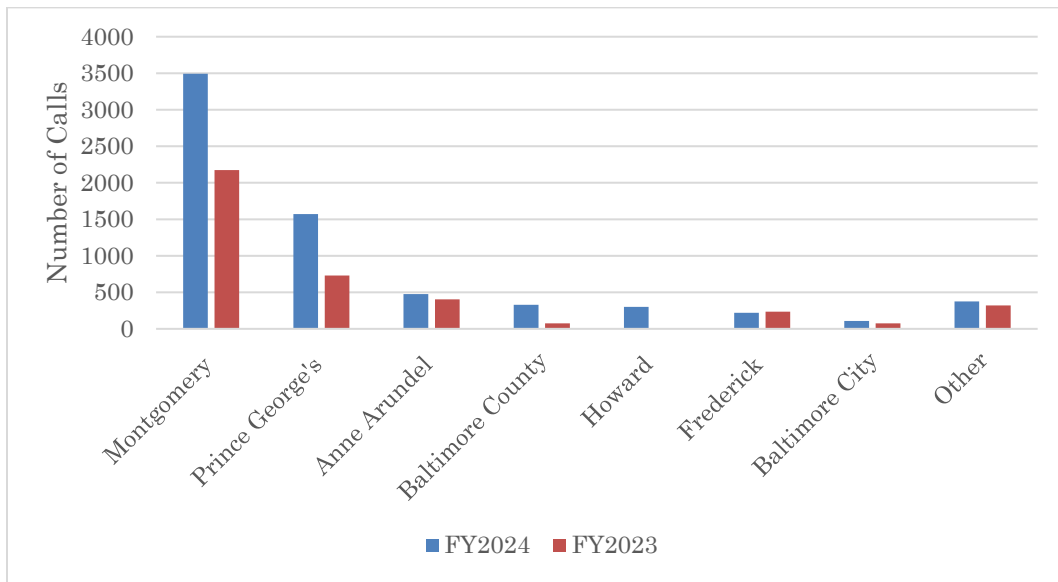


FIGURE 9. CIRCUIT COURTS - TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY JURISDICTION - FY23 - FY24

In fiscal year 2024, circuit courts requested Language Line interpreters in several lesser-use languages: Akan, Hakka Chin, Ga, Hmong, Khmer, Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Malayalam, and Tibetan.

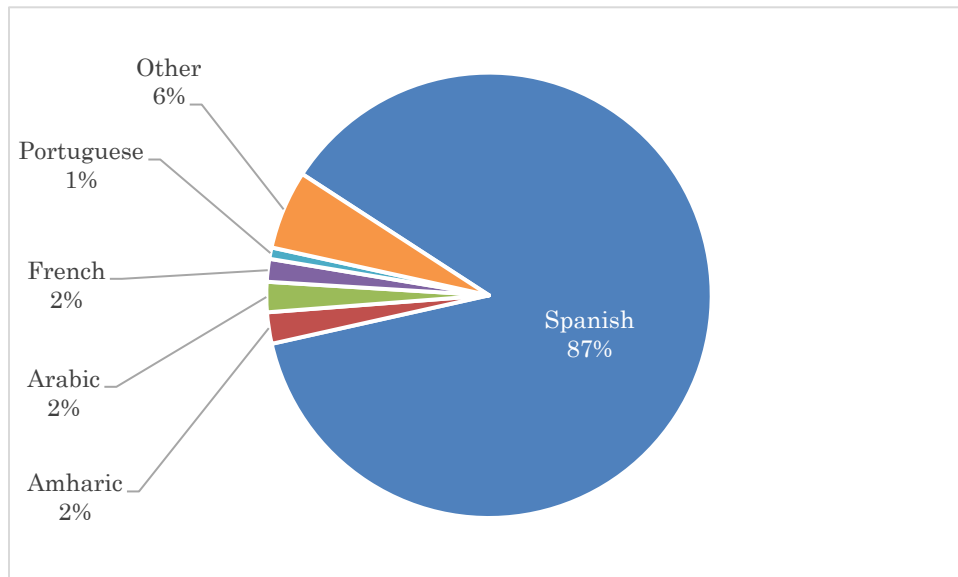


FIGURE 10. CIRCUIT COURTS - TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY LANGUAGE - FY24

DISTRICT COURT

District Court locations use telephonic interpreting extensively in commissioners' offices, at clerk's counters; in District Court Help centers; and at the Maryland Court Help center, a resource that serves individuals regardless of whether their case or issue is within the jurisdiction of the District Court or the circuit courts.

In fiscal year 2024, the use of telephonic interpretation by District Court commissioners increased by 44%. Spanish represents ninety-four percent (94%) of all telephonic interpretation use by commissioners. In fiscal year 2024, commissioners requested telephonic services in total of forty-nine (49) languages, including several lesser-use languages such as Uzbek, Igbo, Kirundi, Mongolian, Sinhalese, and Sorani.

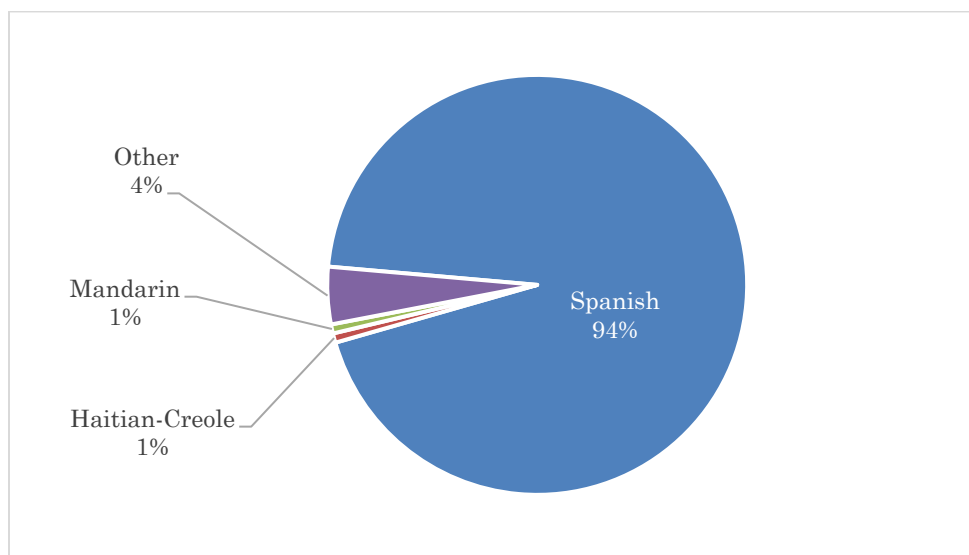


FIGURE 11. DISTRICT COURT COMMISSIONERS – TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY LANGUAGE - FY24

District Court clerks' usage increased significantly from 3,853 uses in the prior fiscal year to 4,664 in fiscal year 2024, an increase of over 20%. Clerk's offices used Language Line services in forty-two (42) languages, including such lesser-used languages as Bambara, Cape Verdian, Cebuano, and Zo. Despite the increase, the Language Line usage in the District Court clerks' offices remains low compared to commissioners and court-help centers.

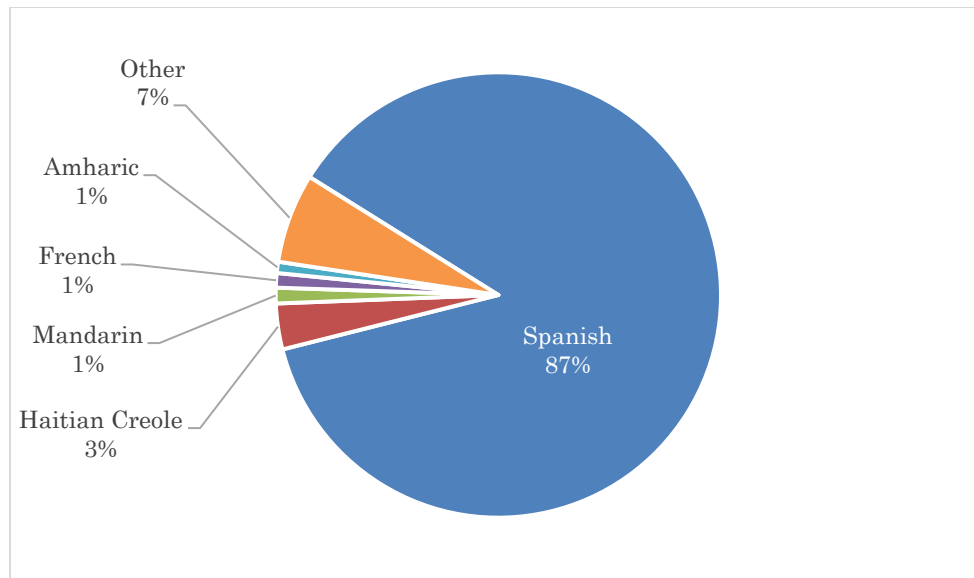


FIGURE 12. DISTRICT COURT - CLERKS - TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY LANGUAGE - FY24

COURT HELP CENTERS

The Maryland Judiciary operates a comprehensive network of court help centers to aid self-represented litigants in navigating the courts and solving legal problems. Circuit courts operate Family Court Help Centers; their use of telephonic interpretation is reflected in overall circuit court use data.

In fiscal year 2024, court help centers used telephonic interpretation for 6,751 interactions, an increase of 15% over the prior year. Services were provided in 47 languages which included rare and indigenous languages such as Akan, Indonesian, Malay, Mam, and Telugu.

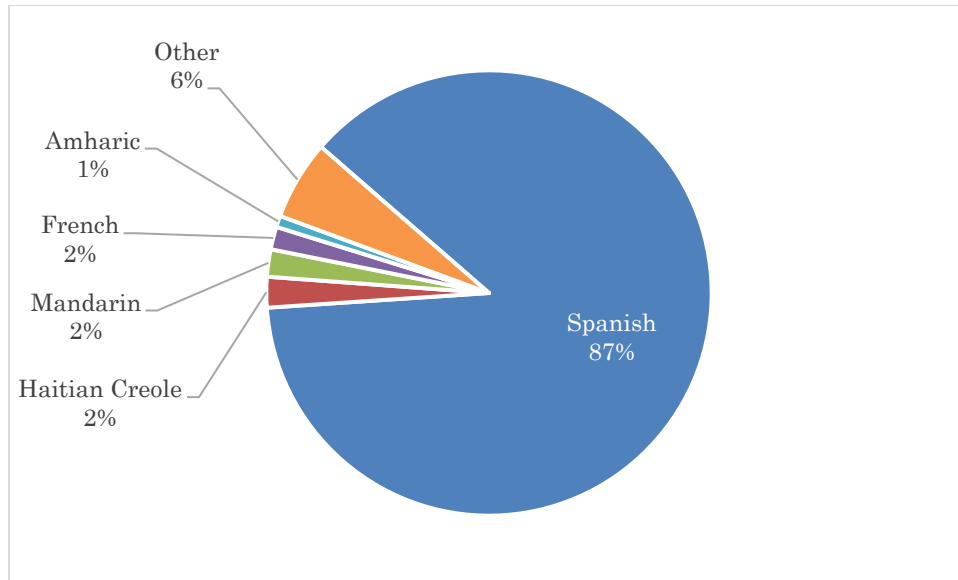


FIGURE 13. DISTRICT COURT HELP CENTERS - TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY LANGUAGE - FY24

Location-based information for commissioners’ use of telephonic interpretation is reflected in the chart below.

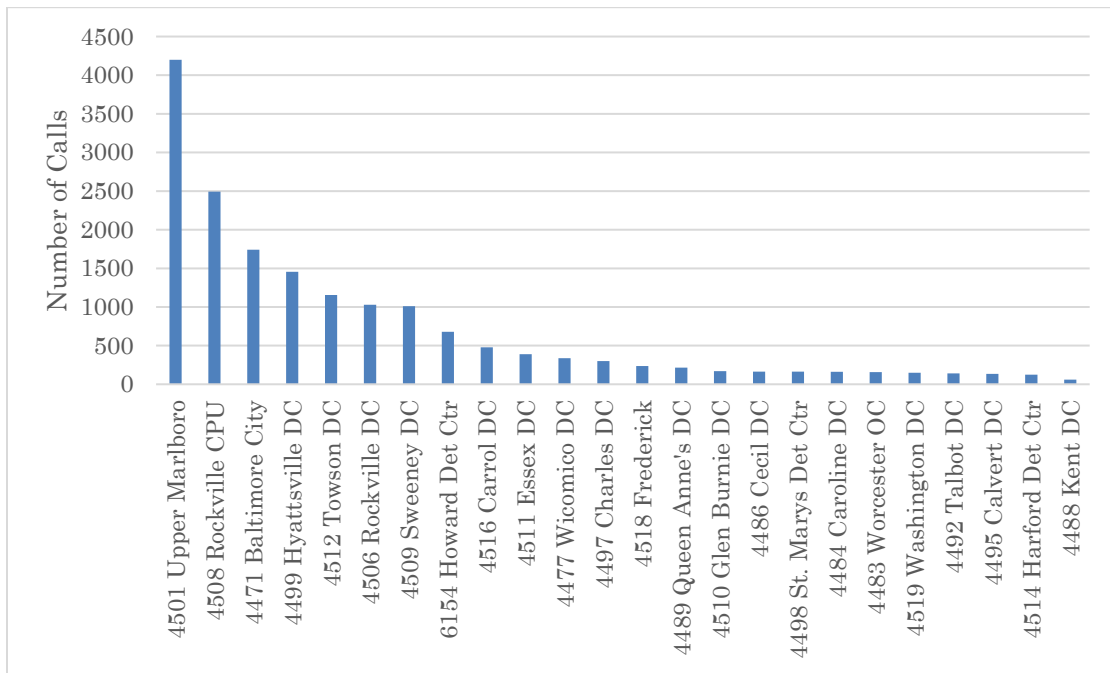


FIGURE 14. DISTRICT COURT COMMISSIONERS - TELEPHONIC INTERPRETATION BY LOCATION - FY24

VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING (VRI)

CIRCUIT COURTS

In fiscal year 2024, the number of court hearings where video interpreters were used continued to decline. While the number of all assignments increased in all courts, the number of VRI proceedings decreased by 17% in the circuit courts.

The Circuit Court for Prince George’s County continues to lead in the use of remote technology. However, in fiscal year 2024, the court conducted 591 VRI events, which is significantly fewer than in fiscal year 2023 (861 events). While some circuit courts scaled down on VRI, others increased their VRI usage from last year or conducted interpreted proceedings remotely for the first time.

TABLE 8. CIRCUIT COURT VRI ASSIGNMENT - FY23 - FY24

Court	FY2023	FY 2024	Δ from FY2023
Allegany	3	4	-33%
Anne Arundel	189	158	-16%
Baltimore City	284	226	-20%
Baltimore City Juvenile Center	295	241	-18%
Baltimore County	422	399	-5%
Calvert	20	6	-70%
Caroline	2	5	-150%
Carroll	23	5	-78%
Cecil	7	5	-29%
Charles	80	55	-31%
Dorchester	1	1	0%
Frederick	38	64	68%
Harford	32	57	78%
Howard	203	198	-2%
Kent	4	3	-25%
Montgomery	325	256	-21%
Montgomery County Family	102	112	10%
Prince George’s	864	591	-32%
Queen Anne’s	23	16	-30%

Court	FY2023	FY 2024	Δ from FY2023
Somerset	0	1	100%
St. Mary's	12	14	17%
Talbot	48	52	8%
Washington	21	23	10%
Worcester	5	0	100%
Wicomico	3	7	133%
Total	3,006	2,499	-17%

DISTRICT COURT

In fiscal year 2024, the District Court use of VRI has increased by 23%. Even though the District Court in Baltimore City has significantly reduced the number of VRI events at all four court locations, other jurisdictions have increased the use of VRI or used it for the first time. The Court Interpreter Program staff hope this positive trend will continue throughout the next fiscal year.

TABLE 9. DISTRICT COURT VRI ASSIGNMENTS – FY23 - FY24

Court	FY2023	FY 2024	Δ from FY2023
Allegany	4	2	-50%
Anne Arundel	23	25	8%
Baltimore City: Fayette	12	10	-17%
Baltimore City: North Avenue	23	10	-57%
Baltimore City: Patapsco	60	16	-73%
Baltimore City Wabash	49	37	-24%
Baltimore County: Catonsville	9	4	-56%
Baltimore County: Essex	1	1	0%
Baltimore County: Towson	13	9	-31%
Carroll	2	6	200%
Caroline	0	0	0
Calvert	2	19	850%
Cecil	22	32	45%
Charles	2	22	1000%

Court	FY2023	FY 2024	Δ from FY2023
Dorchester	4	5	25%
Frederick	25	38	52%
Garrett	0	2	200%
Harford	1	15	1400%
Howard	1	8	700%
Kent	0	3	300%
Montgomery: Silver Spring	4	6	50%
Montgomery: Rockville	32	38	19%
Prince George's: Hyattsville	2	7	250%
Prince George's: Upper Marlboro	7	11	57%
Queen Anne's	0	3	-0%
Somerset	0	2	200%
St. Mary's	4	24	500%
Talbot	7	19	171%
Washington	4	2	-50%
Wicomico	4	12	200%
Worcester	0	3	300%
Total	317	391	23%

REMOTE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES

The Maryland Judiciary continues to promote the use of remote American Sign Language (ASL) services. These services are available to clerks' offices, court help centers, and anywhere in the courthouse deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals may need assistance to communicate on-demand with court personnel. The instances of service increased significantly to 284, up 58% from the year prior, with a total of 9,117 minutes, up 57% from fiscal year 2023.

TABLE 10. REMOTE ASL SERVICES PROVIDED IN ALL COURTS – FY23 - FY24

	FY23	FY24	INCREASE
Transactions	180	284	58%
Minutes	5,792	9,117	57%

TRANSLATION SERVICES

To ensure quality and consistency, Access to Justice uses an outside vendor to provide translations of official court forms, signs, brochures, video scripts, court instructions, and court web pages. Court Interpreter Program staff manage all translation projects, fielding requests from District Court Headquarters, individual courts, and others within the Maryland Judiciary. The Judiciary Translation Policy can be found at: <https://www.courts.state.md.us/interpreter/translationservices>

TABLE 11. TRANSLATION PROJECT REQUESTS - FY24

REQUESTING COURT / DEPARTMENT	NO. OF PROJECTS REQUESTED
Access to Justice	61
Baltimore Co. Circuit Court	1
Frederick Co. Circuit Court	1
Dorchester Co. Circuit Court	2
District Court Headquarters	556
Frederick Co. District Court	1
Montgomery Co. Circuit Court	1
Queen Anne's Co. Circuit Court	1
Total	624

Access to Justice successfully managed all 624 projects to completion, 37% more than the number of projects managed last year (455). All projects were completed in each of the Judiciary's priority languages: Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese, and Korean. Two translations were requested in Arabic and Haitian Creole.

TABLE 12. TRANSLATION PROJECTS BY LANGUAGE - FY24

LANGUAGE	NO. OF PROJECTS REQUESTED
Arabic	1
Chinese	117
French	117
Haitian Creole	1
Korean	117

Russian	117
Spanish	154

Access to Justice receives translation requests for a variety of project types. Requests for court forms account for 74% of all requests.

TABLE 13. TRANSLATION PROJECT TYPES - COMPLETED - FY24

DOCUMENT TYPE	NO. OF PROJECTS REQUESTED
Brochure	61
Form	467
Notice	50
Publication - Other	12
Video Script	27
Web Content	7

UPCOMING INITIATIVES

Several innovations launched during the past year will expand statewide during fiscal year 2024.

Qualified Bilingual Program. Access to Justice and Human Resources received approval from State Court Administrator Judy Rupp to expand the qualified bilingual program to jurisdictions outside of the District Court in Montgomery County and the Circuit Court for Montgomery County.

The jurisdictions which will be invited to participate in Phase II of the pilot were determined based on court interpreter and Language Line usage. The following jurisdictions were approved for expansion:

- District Courts:
 - Anne Arundel
 - Baltimore City
 - Baltimore County
 - Frederick
 - Howard
 - Prince George's

- Circuit Courts:
 - Anne Arundel
 - Baltimore City
 - Baltimore County
 - Frederick
 - Howard
 - Prince George's

Hybrid Video Remote Interpreting. The Court Interpreter Program will continue to partner with the Judicial Information Systems and local counties to develop Zoom/Polycom technology to provide on-demand video interpretation during bail reviews. Plans are underway to distribute additional laptops to courtrooms to allow for remote simultaneous and ASL interpretation.

Judicial College Courses. In 2024, the Court Interpreter Program will teach two one-hour webinars on the following topics:

- *How to Assist Limited English Proficient Customers and Cultural Sensitivity*
- *How to Assist Hard of Hearing Customers*

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