

## **Court Interpreters at Hearings** **Before the State Civil Service Commission**

The Court and Administrative Proceeding Interpreter Certification Law (Act 172) requires that the presiding officer at a hearing before the State Civil Service Commission appoint an interpreter upon request or upon his/her own motion (*sua sponte*) for persons with limited English proficiency or who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The presiding officer may appoint a certified or an otherwise qualified interpreter. A “certified” interpreter is one who has been certified by the Administrative Office of the Pennsylvania Courts (AOPC). If a certified interpreter is unavailable, the presiding officer may appoint an “otherwise qualified” one. An “otherwise qualified” interpreter is one who is able to interpret, and has read, understands, and agrees to abide by the code of ethics and professional conduct for court interpreters. (An otherwise qualified interpreter may be one who is “registered” with AOPC, but not yet certified. AOPC maintains a roster of certified and registered interpreters.)

Before an otherwise qualified interpreter is permitted to interpret, the presiding officer must briefly question (*voir dire*) the interpreter to discover whether the interpreter has an adequate proficiency in the relevant language or in sign language, and a familiarity with the interpreters’ code of ethics and professional conduct. The presiding officer must administer an oath to all interpreters before they begin to interpret.

If possible, the interpreter should attend the pre-hearing conference to allow the interpreter to discuss how the interpretation will be conducted, and to provide the interpreter with copies of any proposed exhibits.

The cost of providing an interpreter will be paid by the State Civil Service Commission.