Supreme Court of Florida

No. AOSC20-20
Amendment 1[1]

IN RE: COVID-19 EMERGENCY PROCEDURES IN RELATION TO SPOKEN LANGUAGE COURT INTERPRETER REGULATIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

WHEREAS the Florida State Courts System continues to monitor and take measures to address the effects on court operations of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), a severe respiratory illness that can spread among humans through respiratory transmission; and

WHEREAS the World Health Organization has declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a pandemic, the Governor of Florida has declared a state of emergency exists, and the Surgeon General and State Health Officer has declared a public health emergency exists; and

1. This amended administrative order is issued to extend through June 30, 2021, certain timeframes for court interpreter examination, registration, application, and certification requirements. Additionally, it provides that any applicant who submits an application between March 31, 2020, and June 30, 2021, shall be allowed to submit their fingerprints through September 28, 2021.

WHEREAS the health, safety, and well-being of judicial officers, court personnel, and community members who interact with the courts are a high priority for the Florida State Courts System; and

WHEREAS section 25.386, Florida Statutes, requires the Supreme Court of Florida to establish standards and procedures for qualifications, certification, professional conduct, discipline, and training of foreign language court interpreters; and

WHEREAS the Florida State Courts System recognizes that the challenges of travel limitations, local operational issues, and cancellation of court events, educational programs, and testing activities may preclude interpreters from fully complying with the requirements of the Florida Rules for Certification and Regulation of Spoken Language Court Interpreters and other promulgated requirements; and

WHEREAS it is the intent of this order to temporarily suspend procedural requirements and limitations that could hinder court interpreters' efforts to comply with renewal and maintenance of registration requirements and official state-level designation attainment in accordance with Florida Rules for Certification and Regulation of Spoken Language Court Interpreters 14.200, 14.205, 14.210, and 14.215;

NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred upon me by Article V, section 2(b), of the Florida Constitution and Florida Rules of Judicial Administration 2.205(a)(2)(B)(iv) and 2.205(a)(2)(B)(v),

IT IS ORDERED that:

1. This order extends previously enacted temporary remedial measures, and these measures shall remain in effect until terminated or as may be provided by a subsequent order.

2. The timeframe by which an interpreter must submit to examination – specifically, within the first year of any two-year registration period or applicable renewal period is hereby suspended through June 30, 2021.

3. For an interpreter whose registration and any corresponding official state-level designation expires on or after March 31, 2020, the reporting cycle is hereby suspended through June 30, 2021.

4. Any applicant who has been fingerprinted from March 31, 2020, through March 31, 2021, shall be allowed to file their initial or renewal registration application by June 30, 2021 with the Court Interpreter Certification and Regulation Program, if otherwise in accordance with operating procedures of the Court Interpreter Certification Board. Further, any applicant who submits an

application from March 31, 2020, through June 30, 2021, shall be allowed to submit their fingerprints through September 28, 2021.

5. For court-employed interpreters hired between September 1, 2019, and the date of this order who have not yet attained official state-level certification, the one-year time period to attain certification is suspended through June 30, 2021. The suspension of the one-year time period restores additional days equal to the number stated in this order.

6. Applicants who are selected as court-employed interpreters and who are hired between March 31, 2020, and June 30, 2021, shall have their employment date deemed July 1, 2021, solely for purposes of becoming certified within one year of employment.

7. The two-year timeframe for language skilled interpreters to take and pass the certifying examination upon notice of its availability or risk loss of language skilled status is suspended from March 31, 2020, through June 30, 2021. The suspension of the two-year time timeframe restores additional days equal to the number stated in this order.

8. The two-year timeframe for provisionally approved interpreters to attain official state-level designation is suspended from March 31,

2020, through June 30, 2021. The suspension of the two-year timeframe restores additional days equal to the number stated in this order.

All other provisions governing the renewal and maintenance of registration of spoken language court interpreters not specifically referenced or amended by this order shall remain in effect.

These provisions are effective upon signing of this administrative order.

DONE AND ORDERED at Tallahassee, Florida, on December 16, 2020.

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Chief Justice Charles T. Canady

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ATTEST:

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John A. Tomasino, Clerk of Court

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