

Use of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) Policy

1. Purpose. The purpose of this policy is to establish standardized guidelines for the appropriate use of Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) in court proceedings to ensure efficient and meaningful language access for limited English proficient (LEP) and deaf or hard-of-hearing litigants.

2. Definitions

- **LEP (Limited English Proficient):** Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.
- **VRI (Video Remote Interpretation):** A form of interpretation delivered through videoconferencing technology, allowing interpreters to provide real-time language access from a remote location.
- **Fully Remote Zoom for Government (ZfG) Hearings:** in these hearings, all parties, attorneys, and interpreters appear via ZfG.
- **Hybrid Hearings (Polycom/ZfG) with Consecutive Interpretation Only:** in these hearings, all parties and attorneys are onsite in the courtroom, and only interpreters appear via Zoom on the Polycom screen.
- **Consecutive Interpretation:** Interpretation rendered during a pause after the speaker finishes speaking.
- **Simultaneous Interpretation:** Interpretation delivered while the speaker is speaking, usually with a short delay.

3. Policy Statement. This policy applies to local court leadership; judges and magistrates who preside over court proceedings requiring language access services, and courtroom staff responsible for managing court interpreters.

Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) provides real-time language access through videoconferencing technology and serves as an effective resource for providing language access in courtroom proceedings. VRI should be used in a manner that upholds due process and accommodates the unique needs of each proceeding and participant.

VRI should be used in place of in-person interpretation when it is determined to be efficient, cost-effective, and sufficient to meet the needs of the proceeding. The Judiciary reimburses interpreters for travel time, mileage, parking expenses, and tolls. In some courts, these travel-related costs can constitute up to 60% of interpreter expenses in circuit courts and 56% in District Court.

Implementing Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) can significantly reduce these costs. VRI allows on-demand access to certified and qualified interpreters, including those for rare languages and American Sign Language. It is also an effective solution for time-sensitive interpreter requests in emergency hearings.

4. Guidelines for Use. VRI is appropriate for use in the following types of proceedings and circumstances where it is determined to be effective and efficient without compromising the quality of interpretation services:

- Traffic cases
- Small claims
- Status/scheduling conferences
- Motions hearings
- Emergency proceedings, including temporary peace or protective order hearings
- Uncontested hearings
- Rare language interpretation requests
- Other brief or procedural matters

Examples of scenarios in which VRI should be utilized in lieu of on-site interpretation include:

1. During bail review hearings
2. A brief matter and the nearest registry interpreter is located over 50 miles one-way.
3. When a petitioner walks in to file an emergency petition, and no on-site interpreter is available.
4. When a proceeding requires a team of two interpreters, and only one is available on-site.
5. No registry interpreters are available to interpret in person, but there are registry interpreters available via video.
6. Inclement weather or hazardous travel conditions, especially for brief proceedings.

5. Decision Factors. Before scheduling a VRI interpreter, court staff should evaluate the following factors:

- Nature and complexity of the proceeding
- Estimated length of the hearing
- Language requested and interpreter availability
- Cost of onsite interpreters vs. the nature and length of the hearing.
- Special needs, accommodations, or expressed preferences of LEP or deaf participants.

6. Technology Requirements and Knowledge Base. For video remote interpreting to serve as an effective and reliable tool, both the right equipment and staff readiness are essential.

Courtrooms using VRI should have:

- ZfG/Polycom videoconferencing technology
- A laptop with a headset (required for simultaneous interpretation or ASL)

In addition, court staff should be familiar with operating interpretation channels to ensure smooth proceedings. For bail reviews, county jails must have ZfG capability on their end so they can successfully connect to ZfG enabled VRI hearings with the Maryland courts.

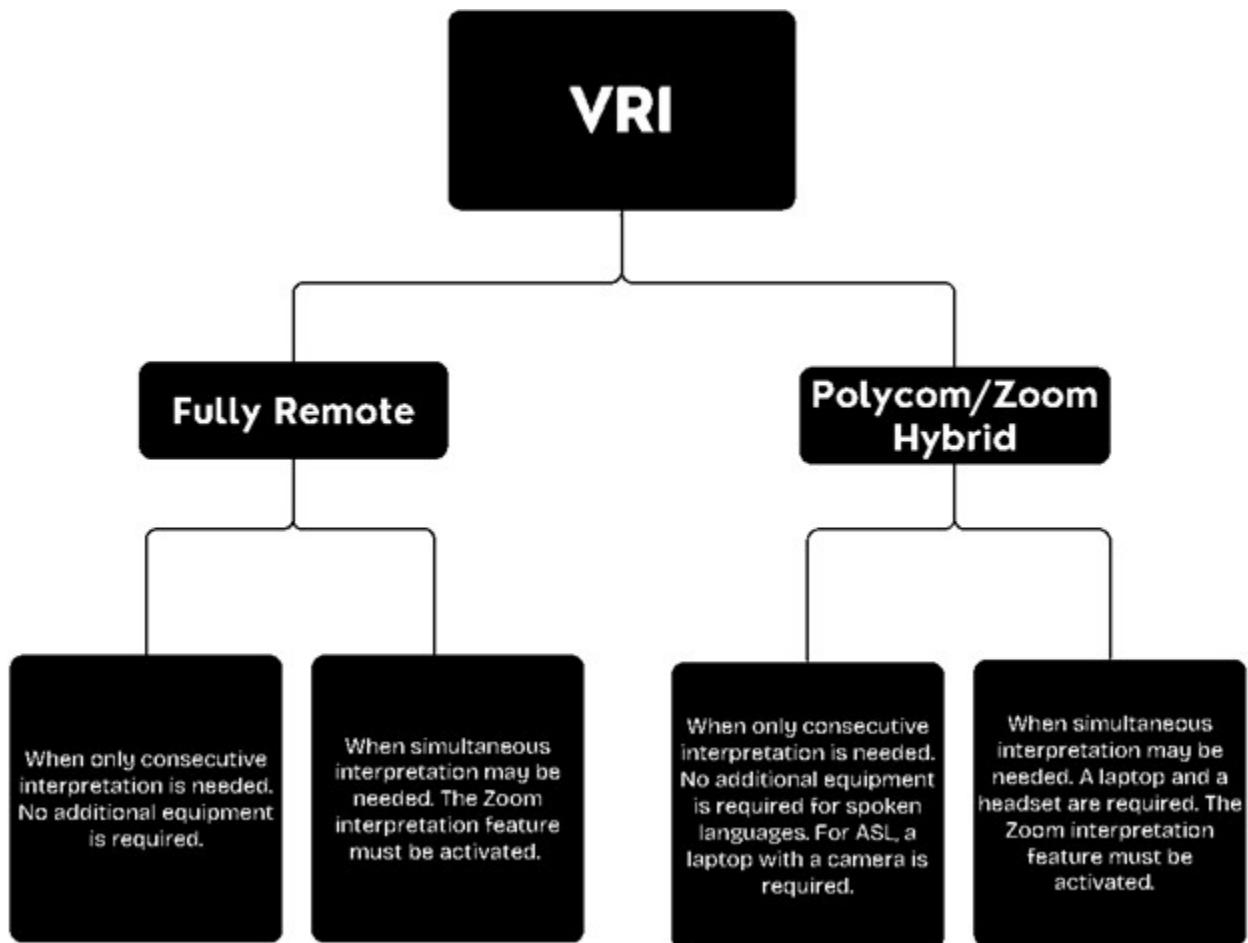
7. Review and Updates

Following these policies can enhance language access, minimize delays, and reduce interpreter costs. These policies shall be reviewed periodically and updated as needed to reflect changes in technology, legal standards, or operational best practices.

8. Support. For questions about the VRI policy and procedures, please contact:

- **Maggie Cao**, Video Interpreter Coordinator, Court Interpreter Program – 410-260-3562 |maggie.cao@mdcourts.gov
- **Ksenia Boitsova**, Court Interpreter Program Administrator – 410-260-3569 |ksenia.boitsova@mdcourts.gov

For technical troubleshooting or questions about obtaining laptops and headsets, please submit a ticket to **ServiceNow** at mdcourts@servicenow.com.



VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING (VRI)

Step-by-Step Reference Guide

In most instances, VRI is used for brief events, emergency hearings, and rare language requests. The types of proceedings may include traffic cases, status and scheduling conferences, emergency proceedings, uncontested hearings, and any other proceedings deemed appropriate for VRI. Interpreters will utilize both consecutive and simultaneous modes of interpretation. Simultaneous interpretation is used for lengthy English statements and requires activating the Zoom interpretation feature.

Please use this step-by-step Reference Guide to set up video remote interpretation:

1. Fully Remote Zoom for Government (ZfG) Hearings

In these hearings, all parties, including attorneys and interpreters, appear remotely via ZfG. Interpreters may interpret in either the consecutive or the simultaneous mode.

For simultaneous interpretation:

- No additional hardware is required
- The Zoom interpretation feature must be activated
- The LEP (Limited English Proficient) participant must select the appropriate foreign language channel once the interpretation feature is activated.
- All other participants, including the Judge, must select the English language channel.

For further guidance on setting up and conducting interpreted hearings in ZfG, please refer to the [Language Access Toolkit](#) and [Judicial College Technology Education training videos](#).

2. Hybrid Hearings (Polycom/Zoom) with Consecutive Interpretation Only

In these hearings, all parties and attorneys are onsite in the courtroom, and only interpreters appear via Zoom on the Polycom screen. This fast and easy option works best for brief and urgent events that do not involve lengthy English language speeches.

Court staff responsibilities:

1. Start the Zoom meeting.
2. Connect Polycom to Zoom:
 - a) Invite the courtroom's Polycom to the Zoom meeting.
 - b) Turn on **CourtSmart** to enable speakers and microphones in the courtroom.

3. Hybrid Hearings (Polycom/Zoom) with ASL or Simultaneous Interpretation

In these hearings, all parties and attorneys are onsite in the courtroom, and only interpreters appear via Zoom on the Polycom screen. A laptop needs to be placed in front of the deaf or LEP person. Additionally, the LEP litigant must be provided with a headset to receive simultaneous interpretation.

Court staff responsibilities:

Invite the laptop to the Zoom hearing:

1. The host starts the Zoom meeting.
2. Invite the laptop to the Zoom meeting.
 - a) Click the up arrow next to the **Participants** icon and click **Invite**.
 - b) Type in the laptop name (e.g., Baltimore County ASL 1), and click **Invite**.
 - c) If you don't know the laptop name in Zoom, you can look it up by opening Zoom on the laptop and clicking on the **Profile** icon.
3. The invitation will appear on the laptop screen. Click **Join**. If you don't see the invitation, join the meeting by entering the meeting ID and passcode.

Connect Polycom to Zoom:

1. Invite Polycom to the Zoom meeting.
2. Turn on CourtSmart to enable the speakers and microphones in the courtroom.

For ASL Interpretation:

- Place the laptop in front of the Deaf person. Make sure the camera is pointed at the hard-of-hearing person, and the remote ASL interpreter can clearly see their signing.

For Spoken Languages with Simultaneous Interpretation:

- Place the laptop in front of the LEP. Connect the headset to the laptop.
1. The host activates the Interpretation feature in Zoom.
 - Click on the **Interpretation** icon. Click **Add Interpreter** and then **Language**.
 - Type in the interpreter's screenname and select a foreign language from the drop-down list.
 - Click **Start**.
 2. Switch Polycom to the English language channel.

- Bring up the Polycom keypad by selecting # on the remote, then press 1 to bring up the menu options.
 - With the menu visible on Polycom, select 8 for Language Interpretation.
 - Enter the number for English (it's usually 2). Press # to submit your selection.
 - Press 0 to mute the original audio, and press # to submit your selection.
 - Select * to close the menu page.
3. On the laptop, click on the Interpretation icon and choose the **foreign** language (e.g., Spanish) channel.
 4. Mute the Zoom audio on the laptop to avoid audio feedback.
 5. Connect the headset to the laptop.

Support

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