



**The State of Our Art: A Discussion of Changing Trends in the
Field of Legal Interpreting**
Small Group Discussion Questions

1. **Consecutive interpreting** is one of the best practices supported by research from the fields of ASL-English and spoken language interpretation. And, in the pilot survey we conducted, practitioners report high agreement regarding the importance of consecutive interpreting to the work of legal interpreters. Yet, practitioners also report using it in their own work rarely/infrequently, and/or that their colleagues do not use it. Why this disconnect between what we believe is important and what we do? What are the real and perceived barriers related to using consecutive interpreting as part of the work of legal interpreters? What are the experiences of your small group in using consecutive interpreting? When does it work and when doesn't it?

2. A number of the best practices identified through our work relate to working with **deaf interpreters** and their role as language specialists in a variety of legal matters. There is case law indicating its acceptance by the judiciary and its effectiveness in creating accessibility. Yet, Deaf interpreters we spoke with during two focus groups report that they are rarely being used in legal settings. What are the real and perceived barriers related to implementing the use of Deaf interpreters more consistently and effectively? What are the experiences of your small group in working with deaf interpreters? What strategies can you identify for addressing the real and perceived barriers?

3. How do you **distinguish generalist versus specialist competence**? In what ways is legal interpreting unique or different from interpreting in other settings? Assuming that a practitioner is a competent generalist, is that sufficient for them to work in the legal setting? Are there exceptions? Based on what/when? What other skills, knowledge or abilities would a generalist need in order to be effective in legal settings—particularly courtroom proceedings? Is a Special Certificate: Legal (SC:L) from RID necessary for working in the legal setting? Why or why not?

4. In both survey and focus group responses, comments regarding **'the gap'** in interpreting and professional performance of practitioners who interpret in the legal setting frequently surface. Respondents perceive that a significant number of practitioners lack important foundation skills and/or self-awareness and regulation. Do you perceive this gap? If so, how does it manifest itself in your experience/observations? What is the source of this gap? What strategies can be employed to reduce or eliminate this gap? What real or perceived barriers exist that would impact implementation of the strategies you identified?

5. A number of the best practices and competencies identified through our work relate to the ability of practitioners to **work collaboratively**—with each other, consumers and members of the judiciary. This collaboration takes on many forms—the ability to appreciate a situation from someone else's point of view other than the interpreter, the ability to interface in a pleasant, cooperative and collegial manner, flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions when required, among others. How would you define the ability to work collaboratively? What skills, knowledge and attitudes are involved? In thinking about the ability to collaborate—from the broader perspective of working effectively with peers, consumers and system-based professionals—how would you rate the effectiveness of legal interpreters you know and work with? How would you rate yourself? On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being extremely competent, where would you place legal interpreters as a whole? What evidence do you have that supports your rating? What strategies or practices might be employed to overall enhance the ability of interpreters in this domain?

6. If you could create the **ideal world for legal interpreters** what would it look like? What type of training, resources and working conditions would exist and be readily available? Now, if you could create the **ideal world for deaf consumers** and the kind of interpreting services they would receive, what would it look like? Are the two ideals compatible? If yes, in what ways. If not, in what ways? What would it take to make the ideal a reality? What practitioner-based barriers exist? What system-based barriers exist?