

(RE: IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE ACT)

A.M. No. 21-12-04-SC, December 15, 2025

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RULES ON FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING IN THE JUDICIARY

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Section 2 of Republic Act No. 11106, or the Filipino Sign Language Act declares as state policy the promotion and protection of full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities and calls all appropriate measures to ensure that the Filipino deaf can exercise the right to expression and opinion;

WHEREAS, Section 3 of Republic Act No. 11106 proclaims Filipino Sign Language (FSL) as the national sign language of the Philippines, which shall be recognized, promoted, and supported as the medium of official communication in all transactions involving the deaf, without prejudice to the use of other forms of communication depending on individual choice or preference;

WHEREAS, Section 17(b) of the 2021 Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11106 enjoins the Judiciary to consider reviewing, amending, enhancing, implementing, and monitoring policies, programs, activities, and projects and to ensure the implementation of Republic Act No. 11106 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, in compliance with the state commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

WHEREAS, to ensure access to justice for the deaf on an equal basis with others and to facilitate their effective role as direct and indirect participants in the legal system, Section 6 of Republic Act No. 11106 mandates the Judiciary to ensure the availability of a qualified sign language interpreter in all proceedings involving the deaf, without prejudice to the right of the deaf to choose other forms or modes of communication;

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 5(5) of the 1987 Constitution vests the Supreme Court with the power to promulgate rules concerning pleading, practice, and procedure in all courts; the admission to the practice of law; the Integrated Bar; and legal assistance to the underprivileged;

WHEREAS, the technical working group was created and later reorganized by the Supreme Court to draft the rules for the implementation of Republic Act No. 11106 in the Judiciary, which was composed of the following:

Chairperson: Hon. Japar B. Dimaampao
Associate Justice
Supreme Court of the Philippines

Vice Chairperson: Hon. Jose Midas P. Marquez
Associate Justice
Supreme Court of the Philippines

Members: Hon. Raul B. Villanueva
Associate Justice
Supreme Court of the Philippines

Hon. Lilian C. Barribal-Co
Officer in Charge
Now Deputy Court Administrator
for Administration
Office of the Court Administrator

Hon. Geraldine C. Fiel-Macaraig
Representative
Court of Appeals

Hon. Juliet M. Manalo-San Gaspar
Representative
Sandiganbayan

Hon. Madonna C. Echiverri
Representative
Regional Trial Court Judges

Hon. Remiebel U. Mondia
FSL Interpreter and Judge
Branch 110, Regional Trial Court Pasay City

Hon. Rasad S. Laguindab
Representative
Shari'ah District Court Judges

Hon. Vladimir Berla S. Daral
Representative
Metropolitan Trial Court Judges

Hon. Alberto O. Romoros

Representative
Shari'ah Circuit Court Judges

Hon. Benjamin Mendillo, Jr.
Commissioner
Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino

Atty. Rhealeth Krizelle D. Ramos
Chief, Programs Management Division
National Council on Disability Affairs

Mariah Agbay
President
Philippine Federation of the Deaf

Carolyn Dagani
FSL Specialist

Shirley Pinky Earnhart
Executive Director
Philippine Registry of Interpreters
for the Deaf

Bernadette Infanta
Deaf Representative
Philippine National Association
of Sign Language Interpreters

Catherine Joy Villareal
President
Philippine National Association
of Sign Language Interpreters

Atty. Mae M. Bautista
Representative
Office of the Chief Justice

Consultants: Dr. Liza Martinez
Convenor

Filipino Sign Language National Network

Atty. Glenda T. Litong
Law Reform Specialist
University of the Philippines Institute
of Human Rights

Secretariat: Atty. April Joy G. Ong
Secretary
Office of Associate Justice
Japar B. Dimaampao

Atty. Carol P. Longalong
Assistant Secretary
Office of Associate Justice
Japar B. Dimaampao

Atty. Kriszanne Cerrise P. Ceñidoza
Assistant Secretary
Office of Associate Justice
Japar B. Dimaampao

Atty. Leah M. Enriquez
Assistant Secretary
Office of Associate Justice
Jose Midas P. Marquez

Atty. Micah Celine S. Carpio-Bibi
Assistant Secretary
Office of Associate Justice
Jose Midas P. Marquez

Mary Joy C. Obogne
Stenographer
Office of the Clerk of Court En Banc

WHEREAS, the Technical Working Group has submitted the draft Rules on Filipino Sign Language Interpreting in the Judiciary for the consideration and approval of the Supreme Court En Banc.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Supreme Court En Banc resolves to ADOPT and APPROVE the Rules on Filipino Sign Language Interpreting in the Judiciary, which shall take effect on December 15, 2025, following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two newspapers of general circulation and on the Supreme Court website.

October 28, 2025, Manila, Philippines.

(Sgd.) ALEXANDER G. GESMUNDO
Chief Justice

(Sgd.) MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) ALFREDO BENJAMIN S. CAGUIOA
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) RAMON PAUL L. HERNANDO
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) AMY C. LAZARO-JAVIER
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) HENRI JEAN PAUL B. INTING
Associate Justice

On official business but left a vote

(Sgd.) RODIL V. ZALAMEDA
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) SAMUEL H. GAERLAN
Associate Justice

On official business but left a vote

(Sgd.) RICARDO R. ROSARIO
Associate Justice

On official business but left a vote

(Sgd.) JHOSEP Y. LOPEZ
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) JAPAR B. DIMAAMPAO
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) JOSE MIDAS P. MARQUEZ
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) ANTONIO T. KHO, JR.
Associate Justice

(Sgd.) MARIA FILOMENA D. SINGH
Associate Justice

On official business but left a vote[*]
(Sgd.) RAUL B. VILLANUEVA
Associate Justice

[*] Erratum: On official leave.

EN BANC

A.M. No. 21-12-04-SC

RULES ON FILIPINO SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING IN THE JUDICIARY

Rule I

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SECTION 1. Title. – This Rules shall be known as the Rules on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) Interpreting in the Judiciary. For brevity, it shall be referred to as the FSL Rules.

SEC. 2. Coverage and Applicability. – The FSL Rules shall apply to court proceedings involving all d/Deaf Filipinos as parties and/or witnesses.

- Courts covered by the FSL Rules. – The FSL Rules shall govern FSL interpreting in the first-and second-level courts, including the Shari'ah Circuit Courts, Shari'ah District Courts, Shari'ah High Court, Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, Court of Tax Appeals, and Supreme Court.

- Cases covered by the FSL Rules. – The FSL Rules shall apply to all actions and proceedings involving d/Deaf Filipinos, at any stage, without prejudice to the right of the d/Deaf to choose other forms or modes of communication, if they so prefer.

SEC. 3. Objective. – The FSL Rules aims to ensure equal, relevant, and effective access to justice for d/Deaf Filipinos, enabling them to participate fully and fairly in court proceedings.

SEC. 4. Interpretation. – The FSL Rules shall be liberally construed and interpreted to promote the interests of d/Deaf Filipinos and to accomplish the objectives of the Filipino Sign Language Act.

SEC. 5. Definition of Terms. – In accordance with Section 7 of the 2021 Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 11106 and for purposes of the FSL Rules, the following terms are defined:

- deaf (with lowercase "d") – Filipinos who cannot fully use their hearing to process information. They may or may not be signers or identify themselves with the community of other persons with hearing loss. Persons with hearing loss who are isolated and use gestural, nonstandard signs are also included under this term.

- Deaf (with uppercase "D") – used as a noun to indicate a group of deaf Filipinos with hearing loss who uses the natural visual language of the community and supports its goals and values as a linguistic and cultural minority. Thus, the Deaf in the Philippines are those deaf Filipinos who collectively identify as a linguistic and cultural community that use FSL and actively support its goals and values. All Deaf Filipinos are deaf, while not all deaf

Filipinos are Deaf.

- Deaf community – a group of Deaf Filipinos who shares a culture, language, interest, value systems, rules of behavior, and norms. The Filipino Deaf community is thus the group of Deaf Filipinos who shares FSL and the culture associated with it including its interests, vision, value systems, rules of behavior, and norms.
- Deaf relay interpreter – an interpreter who is Deaf and relays information (together with an FSL interpreter) between a linguistically isolated deaf person and hearing non-signers
- Filipino Sign Language – the term used by Deaf Filipinos to refer to their visual-spatial language, which has no orthographic system (as distinguished from spoken languages), and is rule-governed at the structural levels of phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse
- Filipino Sign Language interpreter – typically a hearing person who produces or renders a message from spoken language into Filipino Sign Language and/or vice versa
- court-appointed FSL or Deaf relay interpreter – one who is sworn to interpret accurately for the record and ensures the full participation of the d/Deaf in court proceedings
- hearing non-signer – a person who possesses the sense to perceive sounds through the ear but does not know or use sign language as a means of communication
- interpreting – the process of producing or rendering a message to and from the FSL or nonstandard manual communication based on FSL principles.
- linguistically isolated deaf person – a deaf individual who has not had any significant exposure to sign language, resulting in limited communication abilities.
- privileged information – any and all forms of data or communication that are protected from disclosure in judicial proceedings due to a recognized legal privilege, as defined under the Rules of Court and other pertinent laws
- sign language competency – the ability to effectively and efficiently use language receptively (visually or aurally) and expressively (signing)
- translation – the transmission or rendering of a message from the FSL to written English, Filipino, or other Philippine language
- consecutive mode – a method of communication where one person makes a statement, then pauses and allows the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter to interpret the same before the person continues with his or her statement or before the next person speaks
- simultaneous mode – a method of communication where the FSL interpreter listens to the speaker while synchronously signing for the d/Deaf participant. Additionally, the FSL interpreter pays attention to the statements of the d/Deaf participant and verbally relays their message to the other participants in real time.
- Visual Communication Assessment for the Deaf (VCAD) – a tool used to determine the d/Deaf individual's primary language or visual communication method, comprehension level, and any necessary accommodations to ensure their full and effective participation in the process. The assessor shall administer the VCAD one-on-one with the d/Deaf participant and thereafter submit to the court a report containing findings and specific recommendations for appropriate consideration.

Rule II

PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES

SEC. 1. Engagement of a Court-Appointed FSL Interpreter and/or Deaf Relay Interpreter. – In the engagement of the services of an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, the courts shall observe the following process:

- The Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) must furnish all courts with an up-to-date list of accredited FSL interpreters and Deaf relay interpreters. The list must indicate the interpreters' names, eligibility, addresses, contact numbers, and other material details that could aid the court in identifying the most qualified FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter for the case. OCA shall review and update the list annually.
- In cases where a party or a witness is d/Deaf, the court, on its own initiative or within three calendar days from receipt of the motion, shall refer the concerned d/Deaf party or witness to the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino for the conduct of the VCAD.
- If the d/Deaf party or witness manifests that they are proficient in the FSL, such party or witness shall execute a waiver to that effect. The court shall appoint an FSL interpreter from the list furnished by OCA. However, should the court, in the course of the proceedings, determine that the party or witness is not actually FSL proficient, it shall immediately refer them to the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino for the conduct of the VCAD.
- In cases where the VCAD is administered, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino shall send the VCAD report to the court within 10 calendar days from receipt of the order requesting the conduct of VCAD.
- Within three calendar days from receipt of the VCAD report recommending the appointment of an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, or upon the expiration of the 10-day period without receipt of such report, the court shall appoint an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter from the list furnished by OCA. As far as practicable, the court shall appoint an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter who resides within its territorial jurisdiction. Provided, however, that the court shall not appoint an FSL Interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter when it perceives a conflict of interest in the case such as when (1) the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, or their family member, is a relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, employer, employee, client of a party, counsel, or advocate for a party involved in the case or proceeding; (2) the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, or a member of their family within the fourth degree of consanguinity or affinity, has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or with a party in the proceeding, or any other interest that might be affected by the outcome of the case; or (3) the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter has been involved in the choice of counsel or law firm for the case.
- If the d/Deaf party refuses the services of an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter offered by the court on the grounds of unavailability, conflict of interest, or other justifiable reasons, the services of an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter may be obtained at the expense of the d/Deaf party, provided that the other party consents. The refusal to engage the services of an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter offered by the court shall be made in writing and signed by the d/Deaf and their counsel. The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter chosen by the d/Deaf party must be an accredited FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter in accordance with Rule III of the FSL Rules.
- In case of lengthy or complex proceedings, the court, in its discretion, may choose two FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters from the list furnished by OCA, taking into consideration Rule II, Section 3(f) of the FSL Rules.
- The court shall issue an order to the chosen FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, informing them of the hearing date, time, place, court, and branch number.

- The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall appear in court on the date of the scheduled hearing or proceeding. In cases of force majeure, or if the court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter is indisposed, the court shall choose a replacement from the list of the FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters furnished by OCA.

- If the court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter fails to appear on the date of the scheduled hearing, the court, in its discretion, may appoint another accredited interpreter or postpone the hearing to another date. However, if the hearing involves examining a non-deaf party or witness, the court, in its discretion, shall determine whether the hearing may proceed in the absence of an interpreter.

- After the hearing, the clerk of court or any authorized personnel shall issue a certificate of court appearance to the court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter. For the first-and second-level courts, the clerk of court or the authorized personnel shall then send electronic copies of the certificate of court appearance and the certificate of appointment as FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter to the Financial Management Office (FMO), OCA. The court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall submit their Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) account number, or any bank account number as the case may be, for the processing of fees.

For cases before the appellate courts, the clerk of court or any authorized personnel of the said courts shall send electronic copies of the certificate of court appearance and certificate of appointment as FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter. The court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall submit their bank account details to the respective finance offices for the processing of fees.

For hearings outside the province, city, or municipality of residence of the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, travel allowances shall also be provided, pursuant to existing court guidelines.

- The FMO, OCA, or the respective finance offices of the appellate courts, shall deposit the fees and/or travel allowances to the bank account of the court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter within a period of three calendar days from receipt of complete documentary requirements. Bank accounts other than the LBP shall be subject to a service fee to be shouldered by the court-appointed FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter.

- The manner of payment, and the setting and fixing of fees of the FSL interpreter, Deaf relay interpreter, and the VCAD assessor may be subject to the rules on the decentralization of administrative processes from OCA to the Offices of the Regional Court Managers (ORCMs) in the judicial regions.

SEC. 2. Setting and Fixing of Fees of the FSL Interpreter, Deaf Relay Interpreter, and VCAD Assessor. – The respective fees of the FSL interpreter, the Deaf relay interpreter, and the VCAD assessor shall be approved and revised as may be necessary by the Supreme Court, in consultation with the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, with the involvement of and close coordination with the Deaf community, OCA, and other stakeholders. In fixing the fees, the Supreme Court shall be guided by the following:

- The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall be entitled to a reasonable fee for services rendered, including waiting time.

- The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall have a guaranteed minimum payment equivalent to two hours of work. In case of cancellation of the hearing, the court must inform the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter of such cancellation at least one calendar day before the date of the scheduled hearing or as soon as practicable for the court.

- The Supreme Court shall set amounts to cover travel allowances, including, but not limited to, actual

transportation, meal allowance, and accommodation, pursuant to existing court guidelines.

- Courts shall prioritize in their calendar cases employing FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters. As much as practicable, the court should hear cases where an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter is engaged on the same day.
- The VCAD assessor shall be entitled to a reasonable fee for services rendered, including communication or transportation expenses, pursuant to existing court guidelines.

SEC. 3. General Guidelines on the FSL Interpreting in Court Proceedings. – The court shall observe the following guidelines before, during, and after on-site hearings involving the d/Deaf requiring the FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters:

- Prior to the commencement of the hearing, the judge or clerk of court shall assess the courtroom to remove any barriers that may impede effective communication such as noise, lighting, sightlines, and positioning. In case the courtroom is deemed unsuitable due to distractions, the court shall take the testimony in chambers together with the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, necessary court personnel, and counsels for the parties.
- The court shall seek the opinion of the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter as to the best location or proper positioning and proximity of the interpreter in relation to the d/Deaf participants and speakers, to allow optimal access to communication. The court shall ensure that the d/Deaf is able to watch the interpreter and view any visual evidence. If there is written evidence, the court shall allow the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter to suspend interpretation and provide the d/Deaf ample time to review the documents.
- To the extent feasible and within the discretion of the court, the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter may view case files, exhibits, photos, or other records that will be introduced as evidence. The court may provide vocabulary lists, documents, or pleadings to the interpreters in advance to ensure accurate and reliable interpretation.
- At the start of the hearing, the court shall advise everyone in the courtroom of the presence of the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter and clarify their roles. The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall inform the court of any conflict or lack of comprehension between them and the d/Deaf.
- Before the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter assumes their duties as such, the court shall administer the following oath:

Do you solemnly swear to abide by the Rules of Filipino Sign Language Interpreting in the Judiciary and to accurately, completely, and impartially interpret to the accused/defendant/complainant/witness the proceedings of this case?

The oath shall be interpreted into FSL when administered to a Deaf relay interpreter.

- On its own initiative or upon motion, the court may allow scheduled breaks during the proceeding for the FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters. Whenever necessary, a team of two FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters shall be made available for longer proceedings with continuous interpreting. The court shall allow the interpreters to take turns or replace each other every 30 minutes to ensure quality of interpretation.
- Before the start of the testimony of the d/Deaf participant, the court shall set up a video recording device wide enough to show the signing space of both the d/Deaf participant and the interpreter. The signing space shall be positioned in front of the top half of the body and around the head of a person. The video recording of the said testimony shall be kept in the official cloud storage of the court and shall form part of the court records.

SEC. 4. Remote Sign Language Interpreting. – The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter may work from a location outside the courtroom when

- an accredited on-site FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter is not readily available within the location of the court;
- the proceeding is relatively short and does not involve testimonial evidence; and
- the proceeding involves controversial or sensitive matters with possible safety issues for the FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters.

SEC. 5. Guidelines for Remote Sign Language Interpreting. – In cases of remote sign language interpreting, the guidelines on the conduct of videoconferencing must be observed. The FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter should hear the voices of persons speaking in the courtroom and then render the message into sign language with the aid of a video camera. The visual message shall be transmitted to the d/Deaf on a video display. In turn, when the d/Deaf signs to the camera, the interpreter views it on a video screen at the location outside the courtroom and then speaks the oral interpretation, which must be clearly heard in the courtroom. The following additional guidelines shall also be observed:

- The court shall provide a real-time, full-motion video and audio over a dedicated high-speed, wide-bandwidth internet connection that delivers high-quality video images during the proceedings. The images must be clear and large enough to display the face, arms, hands, and fingers of the d/Deaf, the FSL interpreter, and/or the Deaf relay interpreter. The audio must also be clear and audible. The court must ensure that there are adequately trained staff to quickly and efficiently set up and operate the video and audio equipment.
- The court shall inform everyone in the courtroom that an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter will be at a remote location and will appear in court through videoconference.
- The court shall allow the d/Deaf and the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter to confer at least 24 hours before the hearing, during which the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall introduce themselves, briefly describe their roles, and identify possible signing differences or other concerns.
- The court shall conduct the proceedings in either or both consecutive and simultaneous modes of communication to ensure that everything stated in the courtroom is fully and accurately interpreted.
- If the d/Deaf is detained, they shall be transferred to a room where their image is unobstructed by bars or double-paned glass and where they are unhandcuffed.

SEC. 6. Mandatory In-Court Sign Language Interpreting. – Remote sign language interpreting may not be allowed in the following cases: (1) during lengthy or complex proceedings; (2) proceedings with multiple d/Deaf participants; (3) proceedings involving d/Deaf children; (4) when the equipment cannot be properly positioned, or its use is hampered by noise or poor lighting; and (5) in all other cases where videoconferencing is not allowed under existing court guidelines.

SEC. 7. Errors or Ambiguities in Interpreting. – If errors in interpreting are discovered by the court, the parties, the FSL interpreter, and/or the Deaf relay interpreter, the following rules shall be observed:

- Whenever the court, on its initiative or upon manifestation of the FSL interpreter, Deaf relay interpreter, or any of the parties, through counsel, discovers errors or ambiguities in interpreting during the testimony of the d/Deaf, or after their testimonies have been completed, the court shall confer with counsel and/or the parties and the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter. The court shall first determine whether the alleged error is substantial enough to warrant correction. If the court finds that the error is substantial, it shall notify all the parties concerned

regarding the alleged error or ambiguity. Afterward, the court shall conduct a hearing to receive evidence as to the correct interpretation that may be offered by counsel and the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter. The court may also allow another accredited FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter to assist in resolving the error or ambiguity. The court shall then make a final determination as to the correct interpretation. If the correct interpretation is different from the original interpretation, the court shall order the amendment accordingly. The branch clerk of court shall ensure that all corrections are reflected in the records.

- The court stenographer shall transcribe their stenographic notes within 10 calendar days from the time such notes were taken. Within three calendar days from the completion of the transcript, the court stenographer shall notify the concerned party of its availability. In turn, the concerned party shall obtain the transcript within five calendar days from notice. Any error in interpreting shall be raised within five calendar days from receipt of the transcript. All objections to errors in interpreting not raised within the prescribed period shall be deemed waived.

SEC. 8. Interpreting Protocols for the FSL Interpreters and Deaf Relay Interpreters. – FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters shall interpret during court hearings and proceedings using the appropriate modes of interpreting.

- The FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters may use either or both consecutive and simultaneous modes of communication for all question-and-answer exchanges with the d/Deaf.

- The FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall prepare for cases by reviewing relevant materials. They may ask the parties' counsel if they will be referring to any documents during their examination and may seek access to review those documents.

- If there are critical words, phrases, or concepts that the FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters do not understand, they shall inform the court through counsel. The court may request an explanation, rephrasing, or repetition. The FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters may also clarify the spelling of a word or request time to look up any unfamiliar terms.

- The FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters shall interpret the exact response of speakers even if the answers to the questions are nonresponsive.

- Whenever an objection is made to the testimony of a d/Deaf individual taken through an FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter, the FSL interpreter and/or Deaf relay interpreter shall interpret everything that was said up to the time the objection was made and shall instruct the d/Deaf, by hand gesture, not to sign or speak until the judge has ruled on the objection.

SEC. 9. Ethics and Professionalism. – Court-appointed FSL interpreters and/or Deaf relay interpreters shall

- conduct themselves in a courteous, professional, and responsible manner;

- provide complete and accurate interpreting;

- refrain from providing or attempting to provide additional services such as legal advice;

- remain impartial and disclose to the court any possible conflict of interest, under Rule II, Section 1(e) of this Rules before the start of the proceedings;

- preserve the confidentiality of any privileged information and communication and refrain from publicly discussing the matters for which they provided services; and

- observe inclusivity and respect the sexual orientation or gender identity, language and communication, culture, ethnicity, marital status, social or economic status, age, educational attainment, and religious beliefs of the d/Deaf.

SEC. 10. Removal of an FSL Interpreter or Deaf Relay Interpreter. – The court on its initiative or upon motion and after notice and opportunity to be heard, may remove an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter for any of the following reasons:

- inability to communicate due to physical, mental, or emotional incapacity;
- fraud, dishonesty, or deception related to the functions and duties of an interpreter, including willfully and knowingly making false interpretation;
- willful disclosure of confidential or privileged information obtained while serving in an official capacity;
- failure to appear at a scheduled hearing or proceeding without good cause; and
- willful violation of Rule II, Section 9 of this Rules or any other policies and procedures that the Supreme Court may prescribe.

If the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter is removed due to any of the abovementioned grounds, the court shall appoint another FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter from the list furnished by OCA in accordance with Rule II, Section 1 of the FSL Rules.

The court shall furnish OCA and the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino a copy of the order removing the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter.

Rule III

ACCREDITATION AND TRAINING

SEC. 1. Accreditation. – To be eligible for accreditation, the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter must be duly certified by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino and shall submit a verified application under the FSL Rules.

SEC. 2. Qualifications and Contents of the Application. – All applications for accreditation as an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter shall be verified and shall state, among others, that the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter:

- is a citizen and resident of the Philippines;
- is of legal age;
- holds a valid certification as an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter issued by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino;
- is of good moral character;
- has attended and successfully completed a basic orientation training administered by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino to provide instruction on the role of the interpreter and the skills and ethics required of an interpreter in court;
- has attended and completed formal interpreter training, or possesses experience in court interpreting evidenced by certificates of court appearance in at least three instances where actual services have been rendered as an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter;
- has passed a basic court sign language interpreter examination administered by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino; and
- has not been convicted of a crime involving dishonesty.

All documentary requirements shall be attached to the application.

SEC. 3. Period of Validity of Accreditation. – After assessment, OCA shall issue a certificate of accreditation, which shall be valid for three years from the date of approval of the application, unless sooner revoked.

SEC. 4. Renewal of the Accreditation. – The FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter may file a verified application with OCA for renewal of accreditation within 30 calendar days prior to the expiration of the existing accreditation. The application for renewal of accreditation shall be verified and shall state all items under Rule III, Section 2(a)(b)(c)(d)(g)(h) above.

In addition, the applicant for renewal shall also state that they have complied with the continuing education requirement as provided in Rule III, Section 5 of the FSL Rules.

All documentary requirements shall be attached to the application for renewal of accreditation.

Any ground for removal under Rule II, Section 10 may be a ground for nonrenewal of accreditation.

SEC. 5. Continuing Education and Reassessment of Certified Status. – After initial accreditation, the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter must complete a minimum of 24 hours of relevant continuing education every three years to maintain their accreditation status. Accredited FSL interpreters and Deaf relay interpreters must submit official documentation of their attendance in continuing education programs to OCA to maintain their certified status.

SEC. 6. Revocation of Accreditation and Other Sanctions. – OCA, on its initiative or upon recommendation by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, may revoke the accreditation if the FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter ceases to possess any of the requirements for accreditation. The existence of any of the grounds for the removal of an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter under Rule II, Section 10 of this Rules may also be a cause for revocation of accreditation.

Rule IV

TRANSITORY PROVISION

SEC. 1. Transitory Provision. Until a national system of standards, accreditation, and procedures for the FSL interpreting has been established by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, the certification required under Sections 1 and 2(c), as well as the training and examination under Section 2(e) and (g) of this Rules, shall not be a requisite in any application for accreditation as an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter. In lieu thereof, a certification from a sign language training institution or a duly organized sign language association, or certificates of court appearance in at least three instances where actual services have been rendered as an FSL interpreter or Deaf relay interpreter, shall suffice.

Rule V

EFFECTIVITY

SEC. 1. Effectivity. – The FSL Rules shall take effect on December 15, 2025, following its publication in the Official Gazette or in two newspapers of general circulation and on the Supreme Court website.

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