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## FACT SHEET

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### Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Pilot Project

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) uses videoconferencing technology to provide court users with a qualified interpreter, when an onsite interpreter is not readily available. In June 2016, the Judicial Council approved a VRI pilot project to evaluate and test VRI technology in the courts, pursuant to recommendations in the Judicial Council's *Strategic Plan for Language Access in the California Courts* (the Language Access Plan, or LAP). This pilot project aims to expand language access within the California courts by testing different VRI equipment solutions. The VRI pilot will include input from the public and court stakeholders to help the branch evaluate how and when VRI may be appropriate for different types of case events (short matters). On an individual basis, the court will determine if each case event is appropriate for VRI. Both the LAP, and the Judicial Branch Technology Tactical Plan, recommend piloting VRI in the California courts.

#### **Planning for this VRI Pilot Project has included several phases:**

- *Technology:* Equipment to be assessed in the field during the pilot was selected through a competitive zero dollar Request for Proposals (RFP) process, and resulted in the selection of vendors including Connected Justice, and Paras and Associates.
- *Workstream:* A workstream has been established to guide the pilot project. Judicial officers, court interpreters, and technology experts from across the state are involved.
- *Courts:* Numerous courts expressed interest in the pilot. Based on the technology capacity of each court, and interpreter needs and resources, the following three Superior Courts of California have been selected: Merced, Sacramento and Ventura.

### **How does VRI work in court?**

- The local interpreter coordinator will determine if VRI is appropriate for a court event when a limited-English-proficient (LEP) court user needs an interpreter to communicate in court. These are typically court events that are limited in nature (e.g., short, non-complex, uncontested).<sup>1</sup>
- The court interpreter will be offsite but able to see and hear what is going on in the courtroom.
- The LEP person and the interpreter will be able to see and hear one another through the VRI equipment. Appropriate others in the courtroom will be able to hear and see the interpreter.
- The equipment uses encrypted communication to protect privacy. Each of the technological solutions will be able to accommodate confidential attorney-client communication.

### **Why use VRI?**

- Increases the number of LEP parties, and case types, courts can serve with qualified court interpreters within existing statewide resources, currently \$103 million.
- Increases access to credentialed (certified and registered) interpreters, especially in language of lesser diffusion.
- Helps ensure that qualified *in-person* interpreters are scheduled for high stake or lengthy matters when needed.
- Decreases the wait time, and number of rescheduled court events, due to difficulty securing the in-person services of a qualified interpreter; preventing additional missed work by LEP parties.

### **Pilot Evaluation**

- The three pilot courts will be testing solutions from different equipment vendors over a period of six months.

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<sup>1</sup> See Prerequisites, Considerations, and Guidelines for Remote Interpreting in Court Proceedings, LAP, Appendix B, at [http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CLASP\\_report\\_060514.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/CLASP_report_060514.pdf). The LAP also includes Suggested Language for the Judicial Officer When Considering Objections Related to Remote Interpreting (Appendix C), and Visual/Auditory Issues, Confidentiality, and Modes of Interpreting When Working Remotely (Appendix D).

## *VRI Pilot Project*

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- The VRI Pilot will be evaluated by San Diego State University Research Foundation, a third-party, independent evaluator.
- Data collection will take place during the course of the pilot, and the pilot evaluation will include a two-week intensive observation period.
- In addition to effectiveness of equipment solutions, one component of the VRI pilot evaluation is to assess communication effectiveness of VRI, a critical component of due process.
- Feedback data will be solicited from court users, judges, and court interpreters.
- Justice partners (Public Defenders and District Attorneys) will also be able to provide feedback.
- Following conclusion of the VRI pilot, findings and recommendations will be developed for the Judicial Council, including any need to update the LAP's VRI programmatic guidelines, and to establish minimum technical VRI guidelines for the courts.

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### *Additional resources:*

- <http://www.courts.ca.gov/VRI.htm>
- <http://www.courts.ca.gov/LAP.htm>
- <http://www.courts.ca.gov/languageaccess.htm>