

Informational Guide

Re: Court Reporting Programming and Court Reporting as a Profession

There are four major professional career paths in the stenography world: Official Court Reporters (working for the State or Federal Government), Freelance Court Reporters (working as an independent contractor or through a freelancing firm to provide stenographic services, generally for depositions), Closed Captioners (providing subtitles and captions for live and recorded events), and CART Providers (providing services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community). **The information in this document is specific to working as an official court reporter in Iowa, particularly for State of Iowa (District Court) positions.**

Court Reporting Programs:

- There are many court reporting programs across the country.
- Program curriculums are typically between 2 to 2.5 years in duration. While short breaks between quarters, trimesters, or semesters are likely, court reporting programs do not take time off for summer break. This would interfere with the ability to gain the speed necessary to complete the program (225 wpm at 95-97 percent accuracy, sustained for five minutes).
- While many programs are fully virtual or are transitioning to a virtual setting, the programs which will offer the most success are in-person programs, hybrid programs (a mix of both in-person and virtual), or programs offering virtual programs with classes set at specific times allowing students and instructors to have real-time communication. That is not to say the self-paced online programs are impossible or insufficient. The programs simply require more dedication and self-discipline.
- **Recommendations for Court Reporting Programs:**
 - **DMACC**
 - DMACC is currently the only program in Iowa for court reporting. DMACC starts a new session each fall. As of the fall of 2022, the program can be completed nearly fully virtual, with the exception of one class per month which requires in-person attendance at DMACC in Newton.
 - Certain DMACC court reporting classes require virtual attendance at specific times where the entire class is online at the same time and receiving live instruction from their instructor.
 - The professors at DMACC are all extremely experienced and WONDERFUL. The program has been highly rated by our National Court Reporters Association.
 - <https://www.dmacc.edu/programs/courtreporting/Pages/welcome.aspx>
 - **Black Hawk College**
 - Located in Moline, IL.
 - BHC commenced their program in the fall of 2022.
 - The program is fully in person and appears to be an excellent program with wonderful instructors as well.
 - <https://www.bhc.edu/program/court-reporting-technology/>
 - **Anoka Technical College**
 - Currently a hybrid program (similar to DMACC) out of Minnesota.
 - <https://www.anokatech.edu/ProgramsCourses/AdminMgmt/JudicialReporting>
 - **College of Court Reporting**
 - An online program out of Indiana.
 - A new theory course begins every five weeks, so this would be a great place if you wanted to start right away.
 - <http://www.ccr.edu>
 - **Cuyahoga Community College**

- An online program out of Ohio.
- <https://www.tri-c.edu/programs/captioning-and-court-reporting/index.html>

A few personal comments regarding court reporting programs:

The court reporting program is very difficult. To some, it may come easier and more naturally, whereas, to others, it can be extremely challenging and require much more practice. Often *writing* (what we call “typing” on our writer) comes easier for talented gamers, quick typists, pianists, or other musicians who play instruments with their hands. Writing on a writer is similar to playing a piano, as you hit multiple keys at one time.

Court reporting programs are streamlined to focus on what you NEED for this career. The bulk of schooling focuses on theory and speed classes; however, medical language, legal courses, grammar and punctuation classes, internships, and CAT (computer-aided translation) software education are included and important components of the programs. The grammar and punctuation courses for court reporting are different than standard English-Literature courses, as you are learning to edit and punctuate the **way people talk and not the way one would write a book.**

Court reporting programs begin by learning where the keys are on the keyboard. Different combinations of keys make different letters. Along with the familiarization of the keyboard comes the theory of writing (different key combinations make different sound beginnings and endings).

Upon completion of theory, the primary focus shifts to speed building. Speed-building courses top out at 225 wpm sustained for five minutes with 95 or 97 percent accuracy.

Some credits from prior college education may transfer, but likely very few as almost every class in the court reporting program is specifically tailored to the court reporting field.

A to Z Program: If you are seriously considering court reporting programming, there is a FREE course called A to Z through our National Court Reporters Association which introduces stenography to potential students to get a feel for the skill. The program is virtual and ranges from four to six weeks. Visit <https://www.ncra.org/discoversteno/discoversteno-home/learn/ncra-a-to-z-online-program-to-learn-more>.

Requirements to Work as an Official Court Reporter in Iowa:

- Graduation/completion of a court reporting program **AND**
- Certification as a Certified Shorthand Reporter (CSR) by the Iowa Board of Shorthand Reporters.

NOTE: In Iowa, there is a one-year window in which a graduate of a court reporting program can work uncertified as an official court reporter; however, if unable to become certified within that year, employment as an official court reporter must be terminated, pending certification.

Official Court Reporters:

- **Type of Work Provided:**
 - Can work for the State or Federal Government. The information contained herein focuses on State (District Court) positions.
 - Reporters are generally assigned to work with the same judge every day. With the court reporter shortage we are experiencing, the ratio of judges to court reporters is far less than 1:1, hence, there is some fluctuation of coverage.
 - Official reporters work at a courthouse during business hours, Monday through Friday.
 - Work primarily consists of making a verbatim record of hearings and trials in the courtroom; providing administrative assistance to judges; and preparing transcripts, upon request of a party.

- **Making the verbatim record:**
 - Official Reporters take down hearings and trials for probate, civil, criminal, and Juvenile Court matters.
 - While many hearings are brief and the work consists of going in and out of court throughout the day, Jury or Non-Jury Trials can last days or weeks.
 - Records for criminal trials range from serious misdemeanors (i.e. First Offense OWIs) to Class A felonies (i.e. Murders).
 - Records for civil trials include estate proceedings, guardianship/conservatorship proceedings, divorces, civil lawsuits, etc.
- **Transcript Preparation:**
 - Official reporters prepare transcripts of hearings only upon request of an attorney, party, or judge.
 - Transcript work is treated as a side business. Officials are responsible for tracking their income and expenses, as well as filing taxes for transcript work. Although this is a side business, it is a required task of an official court reporter.
- **Salary/Benefits:**
 - The State of Iowa offers a salary range of \$55,910 - \$86,694 (updated January of 2023).
 - The State of Iowa offers health, dental, vision, and life insurance; an IPERS retirement plan; flexible spending accounts; access to the Retirement Investors Club; paid time off; paid holidays; as well as other benefits.
 - Additional to their salaries, reporters charge \$3.50 per page for an original transcript and \$0.50 per page for additional copies. This added income varies each year.

A personal comment regarding my work as an official court reporter in Iowa:

I LOVE my job working for the State of Iowa. Official reporters have very close relationships with our judges, and every day at work is something different.