

**CUNY TV's Magazine Show**  
**"Study With The Best"**

**Feature Story: Be A Court Interpreter**

**Duane Ferguson, Study with the Best Host:** There is a growing need for court interpreters throughout the New York State Unified Court System. If you are fluent in English and speak another language including sign language, this may be a good career for you. We'll speak with some CUNY graduates on why they enjoy their work so much and how to become a New York State Court Interpreter.

**Court Officer:** All rise.

**Trial Scene**

**Judge:** I understand that you require the services of a court interpreter, is that correct?

**Court Interpreter:** Buenos Días, señor.

**Sandra Bryan, Coordinator, New York State Interpreting Services:** Everyone has the right to express themselves in court for whatever the case is about, whatever the situation might be and with court interpreters we make that possible.

**Sandra Bryan:** People don't seem to realize that you don't have to speak English to have your day in court, that is what interpreters are there to do.

**Child Custody Hearing with Sign Language Interpreter, Client and Lawyer**

**Lawyer:** When did your husband move out?

**Sign Language Interpreter:** Signs.

**Client:** Signs.

**Sign Language Interpreter:** 7 months ago.

**Lawyer:** Has he visited the children since he left?

**Sign Language Interpreter:** Signs.

**Client:** Signs.

**Sign Language Interpreter:** Yes, he came over the day after Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.

**Sandra Bryan:** There is a huge opportunity right now for people that speak another language or are fluent in sign language because since we provide interpreters in any language, we need to have people that are proficient in Arabic, in Albanian, French, Bengali, anything from A to Z for all of the courts in New York State.

**Sandra Bryan:** So there are opportunities if you are interested in full-time positions, if you are interested in part-time, if you are interested in freelancing. Even one day a week, even just for the summertime, there are opportunities.

**Hugo Alemán, New York State Court Interpreter:** After I graduated from Hunter College in theater and film, I did various odd jobs and worked in acting. And my mother was already a court interpreter in the system and she suggested that I take the court interpretation exam, which I did and I passed and I became a freelance interpreter.

### **Trial Scene**

**Lawyer:** Diagnosis and treatment, inflammation of the Carotid, high arterial pressure.

**Court Interpreter Hugo Alemán translates in Spanish to plaintiff sitting in stand:**  
Diagnóstico y tratamiento: Inflamación de la Carótida, presión arterial elevada.

**Hugo Alemán:** It's a job which really stimulates your mind because you are constantly updating your vocabulary. You are constantly interacting with people from different cultures.

**Sandra Bryan:** It is very rewarding. At the same time, it is never boring. You just never know what a typical day. There is no typical day. You never know what kind of day you are going to have in terms of cases.

**Hugo Alemán:** You could be helping people, like I say, fill out an application. You could be in the middle of a trial the next hour and then you can be in a hearing the next trial. So it is unpredictable.

**Sandra Bryan:** Well, the minimum requirements in order to begin the whole process and be an interpreter is to be a high school graduate and know a foreign language and then you qualify to take the exam.

You should be comfortable in having a conversation, being able to interpret newscasts lets say, news reports in both languages.

Once you pass our exams, your name automatically becomes part of our state-wide roster and you will be able to tell us in what parts of the city you are available for assignments, what parts of the state you might be available for assignments. And the courts would call you whenever they need someone in the language under which you are listed.

**Sandra Bryan:** Hunter College offers two programs, one is in the Romance Languages Department where one could get a BA degree in Spanish-English Interpretation and Translation. And they also offer a certificate program in the School of Continuing Education where you could a certificate in Spanish-English Interpretation and Translation. It's great that CUNY offers these programs because it is responding to the growing demand of interpreters in the legal field as well as the medical and business industries.

**Sandra Bryan:** Our salary currently is roughly \$50,000 a year to begin with and has a full benefit package. We also have the per diem rate and at this point it's \$250 for a full day assignment or \$140 for a half-day assignment.

**Hugo Alemán:** You get the satisfaction from helping people. You are helping people to communicate to understand the proceedings that are occurring and they would not be able to if not for you. And the court personnel would not be able to communicate with them either unless you are present so what you do is vital.

**Sandra Bryan:** So if you are a people person and you like to talk, there is a place for you in the court system as a court interpreter, definitely. It is a lot of fun.

I would encourage anyone interested in a career in court interpreting to visit our website at: [WWW.NYCOURTS.GOV/COURT INTERPRETER](http://WWW.NYCOURTS.GOV/COURT_INTERPRETER)

**Sign Language Interpreter:** Signs "We Speak Your Language"