

teacher certification, financial aid information, and general information on related personnel issues—including recruitment, retention, and supply of and demand for special education professionals—contact:

- National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education, Council

for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 20191-1589.
Internet: <http://www.special-ed-careers.org>

To learn more about the special education teacher certification and licensing requirements in your State, contact your State's department of education.

Legal Occupations

Court Reporters

(O*NET 23-2091.00)

Significant Points

- Court reporters usually need a 2- or 4- year postsecondary school degree.
- Demand for realtime and broadcast captioning and translating will result in employment growth of court reporters.
- Job opportunities should be best for those with certification from the National Court Reporters Association.

Nature of the Work

Court reporters typically take verbatim reports of speeches, conversations, legal proceedings, meetings, and other events when written accounts of spoken words are necessary for correspondence, records, or legal proof. Court reporters not only play a critical role in judicial proceedings, but every meeting where the spoken word must be preserved as a written transcript. They are responsible for ensuring a complete, accurate, and secure legal record. In addition to preparing and protecting the legal record, many court reporters assist judges and trial attorneys in a variety of ways, such as organizing and searching for information in the official record or making suggestions to judges and attorneys regarding courtroom administration and procedure. Increasingly, court reporters are providing closed-captioning and realtime translating services to the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Court reporters document all statements made in official proceedings using a stenotype machine, which allows them to press multiple keys at a time to record combinations of letters representing sounds, words, or phrases. These symbols are then recorded on computer disks or CD-ROM, which are then translated and displayed as text in a process called computer-aided transcription (CAT). In all cases, accuracy is crucial because there is only one person creating an official transcript. In a judicial setting, for example, appeals often depend on the court reporter's transcript.

Stenotype machines used for realtime captioning are linked directly to the computer. As the reporter keys in the symbols, they instantly appear as text on the screen. This process, called Communications Access Realtime Translation (CART), is used in courts, classrooms, meetings, and for closed captioning for the hearing-impaired on television.

Court reporters are responsible for a number of duties both before and after transcribing events. First, they must create and maintain the computer dictionary that they use to translate stenographic strokes into written text. They may customize the dictionary with word parts, words, or terminology specific to the proceeding, program, or event—such as a religious service—they plan to transcribe.

After documenting proceedings, court reporters must edit their CART translation for correct grammar, accurate identification of proper names and places, and to ensure the record or testimony is distinguishable. They usually prepare written transcripts, make copies, and provide transcript information to court, counsel, parties, and the public upon request. They also develop procedures for easy storage and retrieval of all stenographic notes and files in paper or digital format.

Although many court reporters record official proceedings in the courtroom, the majority of them work outside the courtroom. Freelance reporters, for example, take depositions for attorneys in offices and document proceedings of meetings, conventions, and other private activities. Others capture the proceedings in government agencies of all levels, from the U.S. Congress to State and



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local governing bodies. Court reporters who specialize in captioning live television programming for people with hearing loss are commonly known as *stenocaptioners*. They work for television networks or cable stations captioning news, emergency broadcasts, sporting events, and other programming. With CART and broadcast captioning, the level of understanding gained by a person with hearing loss depends entirely on the skill of the stenocaptioner. In an emergency situation, such as a tornado or hurricane, peoples' safety may depend entirely on the information provided in the form of captioning.

Medical transcriptionists, discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*, have similar duties, but with a different focus. They translate and edit recorded dictation by physicians and other healthcare providers regarding patient assessment and treatment.

Working Conditions

The majority of court reporters work in comfortable settings, such as in offices of attorneys, courtrooms, legislatures, and conventions. An increasing number of court reporters work from home-based offices as independent contractors.

Work in this occupation presents few hazards, although sitting in the same position for long periods can be tiring, and workers can suffer wrist, back, neck, or eye problems due to strain and risk repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome. Also, the pressure to be accurate and fast also can be stressful.

Many official court reporters work a standard 40-hour week. Self-employed court reporters usually work flexible hours—including part-time, evenings, weekends, or on an on-call basis.

Employment

Court reporters held about 18,000 jobs in 2000. Of those who worked for a wage or salary, about 11,000 worked for State and local governments, a reflection of the large number of court reporters working in courts, legislatures, and various agencies. Most of the rest worked as independent contractors or employees of court reporting agencies. About 13 percent were self-employed.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Court reporters usually complete a 2- or 4-year training program, offered by about 160 postsecondary vocational and technical schools and colleges. Currently, the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) has approved about 86 programs, all of which offer courses in computer-aided transcription and real-time reporting. NCRA-approved programs require students to capture a minimum of 225 words per minute. Court reporters in the Federal Government must capture at least 225 words a minute.

Some States require court reporters to be Notary Publics, or to be a Certified Court Reporter (CCR); reporters must pass a State certification test administered by a board of examiners to earn this designation. The National Court Reporters Association confers the entry-level designation, Registered Professional Reporter (RPR), upon those who pass a four-part examination and participate in mandatory continuing education programs. Although voluntary, the RPR designation is recognized as a mark of distinction in this field. A reporter may obtain additional certifications that demonstrate higher levels of competency. The NCRA also offers a designation called Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR). This designation promotes and recognizes competence in the specialized skill of converting the spoken word into the written word instantaneously. Reporters, working as stenocaptioners or CART providers, use realtime skills to produce captions for the deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers.

Court reporters must have excellent listening skills, as well as good English grammar and punctuation skills. They must also be aware of business practices and current events, especially the correct

spelling of names of people, places, and events that may be mentioned in a broadcast or in court proceedings. For those who work in courtrooms, an expert knowledge of legal terminology and criminal and appellate procedure is essential. Because stenographic capturing of proceedings requires a computerized stenography machine, court reporters must be knowledgeable about computer hardware and software applications.

With experience and education, court reporters can advance to administrative and management positions, consulting, or teaching.

Job Outlook

Employment of court reporters is projected to grow about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2010. Demand for court reporter services will be spurred by the continuing need for accurate transcription of proceedings in courts and in pretrial depositions, and by the growing need to create captions of live or prerecorded television and provide other realtime translating services for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

Federal legislation mandates that by 2006, all new television programming must be captioned for the deaf and hard-of-hearing. Additionally, the American with Disabilities Act gives deaf and hard-of-hearing students in colleges and universities the right to request access to realtime translation in their classes. Both of these factors are expected to increase demand for trained stenographic court reporters to provide realtime captioning and Communications Access Realtime Translation (CART) services. Although these services are transcript-free and differ from traditional court reporting, which uses computer-aided transcription to turn spoken words into permanent text, they require the same skills that court reporters learn in their training.

Despite increasing numbers of civil and criminal cases, budget constraints are expected to limit the ability of Federal, State, and local courts to expand, also limiting the demand for traditional court reporting services in courtrooms and other legal venues. Also, in efforts to keep costs down, many courtrooms have installed tape recorders to maintain records of proceedings. Despite the use of audiotape and videotape technology, court reporters can quickly turn spoken words into readable, searchable, permanent text so they will continue to be needed to produce written legal transcripts and proceedings for publication.

The Internet is expected to affect how reporting services are provided as online video technology improves and more meetings, college classes, and even depositions take place on the Internet. Court reporters will be in demand online to provide instantaneous text of those meetings in a searchable, easy-to-access medium.

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Earnings

Court reporters had median annual earnings of \$39,660 in 2000. The middle 50 percent earned between \$28,630 and \$51,740. The lowest paid 10 percent earned less than \$18,750, and the highest paid 10 percent earned over \$69,060. Median annual earnings in 2000 were \$37,640 for court reporters working in local government.

Compensation methods for court reporters vary, depending on the type of reporting jobs, the experience of the individual reporter, the level of certification achieved and the region. Official court reporters earn a salary and a per-page fee for transcripts. Many salaried court reporters supplement their income by doing additional freelance work. Freelance court reporters are paid per job and receive a per-page fee for transcripts. Communication access realtime translation providers are paid hourly. Stenocaptioners are paid a salary and benefits if they work as employees of a captioning company; stenocaptioners working as independent contractors are paid hourly.

According to a National Court Reporters Association survey of its members, average annual earnings for court reporters were \$61,830 in 1999.

Related Occupations

A number of other workers type, record information, and process paperwork. Among these are secretaries and administrative assistants, medical transcriptionists, receptionists and information clerks, and human resources assistants, except payroll and timekeeping. Other workers who provide legal support include paralegals and legal assistants.

Sources of Additional Information

State employment service offices can provide information about job openings for court reporters. For information about careers, training, and certification in court reporting, contact:

► National Court Reporters Association, 8224 Old Courthouse Rd., Vienna, VA 22182. Internet: <http://www.ncraonline.org> and <http://www.bestfuture.com>

► United States Court Reporters Association, 1904 Marvel Lane, Liberty, MO 64068. Internet: <http://www.uscra.org>

Judges, Magistrates, and Other Judicial Workers

(O*NET 23-1021.00, 23-1022.00, 23-1023.00)

Significant Points

- A bachelor's degree and work experience are the minimum requirements for a judgeship or magistrate position; however, most workers filling these positions also have law degrees.
- Judges and magistrates should encounter competition for jobs.
- Demand for arbitrators, mediators, and conciliators is growing because of the high cost and long delays associated with litigation.

Nature of the Work

Judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers apply the law and oversee the legal process in courts according to local, State, and Federal statutes. They preside over cases concerning every aspect of society, from traffic offenses to disputes over management of professional sports, or from the rights of huge corporations to questions of disconnecting life support equipment for terminally ill persons. All judicial workers must ensure that trials and hearings are conducted fairly and that the court administers justice in a manner which safeguards the legal rights of all parties involved.

The most visible responsibility of judges is presiding over trials or hearings and listening as attorneys represent the parties present. They rule on the admissibility of evidence and the methods of conducting testimony, and they may be called upon to settle disputes between opposing attorneys. Also, they ensure that rules and procedures are followed, and if unusual circumstances arise for which standard procedures have not been established, they determine the manner in which the trial will proceed based on their interpretation of the law.

Judges often hold pretrial hearings for cases. They listen to allegations and determine whether the evidence presented merits a trial. In criminal cases, judges may decide that persons charged with

crimes should be held in jail pending their trial, or they may set conditions for release. In civil cases, they occasionally impose restrictions upon the parties until a trial is held.

In many trials, juries are selected to decide guilt or innocence in criminal cases or liability and compensation in civil cases. Judges instruct juries on applicable laws, direct them to deduce the facts from the evidence presented, and hear their verdict. When the law does not require a jury trial or when the parties waive their right to a jury, judges decide the cases. In such cases, the judge determines guilt and imposes sentences in a criminal case; in civil cases, the judge awards relief—such as compensation for damages—to the parties in the lawsuit (also called litigants). Judges also work outside the courtroom, “in chambers.” In these, their private offices, judges read documents on pleadings and motions, research legal issues, write opinions, and oversee the court's operations. In some jurisdictions, judges also manage the courts' administrative and clerical staff.

Judges' duties vary according to the extent of their jurisdictions and powers. *General trial court judges* of the Federal and State court systems have jurisdiction over any case in their system. They usually try civil cases transcending the jurisdiction of lower courts and all cases involving felony offenses. Federal and State *appellate court judges*, although few in number, have the power to overrule decisions made by trial court or administrative law judges if they determine that legal errors were made in a case or if legal precedent does not support the judgment of the lower court. They rule on a small number of cases and rarely have direct contacts with litigants. Instead, they usually base their decisions on lower court records and lawyers' written and oral arguments.

Many State court judges preside in courts in which jurisdiction is limited by law to certain types of cases. A variety of titles are assigned to these judges, but among the most common are *municipal court judge*, *county court judge*, *magistrate*, or *justice of the peace*. Traffic violations, misdemeanors, small claims cases, and pretrial hearings constitute the bulk of the work of these judges, but some States allow them to handle cases involving domestic relations, probate, contracts, and other selected areas of the law.

Administrative law judges, sometimes called *hearing officers* or *adjudicators*, are employed by government agencies to make determinations for administrative agencies. They make decisions on a person's eligibility for various Social Security benefits or worker's compensation, protection of the environment, enforcement of health and safety regulations, employment discrimination, and compliance with economic regulatory requirements.

Arbitration, mediation, and conciliation—Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR)—are alternative processes that can be used to settle disputes between parties. All ADR hearings are private and confidential, and the processes are less formal than a court trial. If no settlement is reached using ADR, any statements made during the proceedings are inadmissible as evidence in any subsequent litigation.

During arbitration, opposing parties submit their dispute to one or more impartial persons, called arbitrators, for a final and binding decision. Arbitrators usually are attorneys or businesspersons with expertise in a particular field. The parties identify beforehand the issues to be resolved by arbitration, the scope of the relief to be awarded, and many of the procedural aspects of the process. Few awards are reviewed by the courts because the parties have agreed to be bound by the decision of their arbitrator, although in some cases, it is prearranged that the award will only be advisory. Mediation involves an attempt by the parties to resolve their dispute with the aid of a neutral third party, and generally is used when the parties wish to preserve their relationship. A mediator may offer suggestions, but resolution of the dispute rests with the parties