

NEW ENGLAND  
*neta* news  
TRANSLATORS ASSOCIATION

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## Early-bird registration for the 2017 NETA Conference ends March 1<sup>ST</sup>

By Suzanne Owen



If you want to secure a spot at a discounted price, make sure you register by March 1st for the May 6th annual conference. Held in collaboration with and at UMass Boston, the theme of the conference is *Translation & Interpreting as Access: What We Provide Matters*.

Four different tracks will be covered: translation, interpreting, auxiliary/technical services and student presentations. The varied sessions will offer opportunities to hear speakers address current, industry-relevant topics and engage in discussions in and out of the presentation rooms.

In addition to welcoming Christopher Larkosh from UMass Dartmouth as our keynote speaker and Barry S. Olsen from InterpretAmerica as our endnote speaker, we are honored to host a variety of distinguished presenters.

Topics of interest to translators will include:

- computer tips and tricks for translators using a Window/Mac PC's features to facilitate work, speed up searches and more effectively use existing dictionaries, thesauri and voice/text applications, presented by Eduardo Berinstein, certified ATA translator and certified court interpreter;



*Keynote Speaker*  
Christopher Larkosh is  
Associate Professor of  
Portuguese at UMass  
Dartmouth.

**Register for the 2017 NETA conference**  
at [netaweb.org](http://netaweb.org). Look for the "register" button  
at the bottom left of the page.

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## Massive Response to President Trump's Immigration Order



"President Donald J. Trump: You can't win the war on terror without #translators and #interpreters!" This was one of many messages tweeted and retweeted in the hours and days following the signing of the U.S. President's Executive Order on Immigration on January 27, 2017.

Lawyers and military personnel who have close relationships with interpreters in their day-to-day work raised their voices in outrage that interpreters who have risked their lives and the lives of their families to work for the United States armed forces were now being denied refuge in this country. The Pentagon weighed in, providing a list of interpreters who should be allowed to enter the United States. Members of Congress who served in the military wrote letters to President Trump.



NETA joined many professional translation and interpreting organizations, that signed an open letter to the President protesting the Executive Order. *Continued on page 3*

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#### **Upcoming Monthly Meeting:**

**February 25 2-4 pm** at Boston University's Center for English Language and Orientation Programs [Directions to CELOP](#)

#### **Google Tools for Your T & I Business**

Come learn about some of the free tools that Google offers entrepreneurs like you to make work easier and more efficient. Do you want to separate your business calls from personal calls? Try Google Voice. Do you want to organize your client feedback? Use Google Forms. Do you need to collaborate on documents and presentations? Google Drive makes it easy.

Sign up for a Gmail account, and bring a laptop or tablet to the session. We will walk through each and every tool. You won't want to miss the chance to test drive them immediately!

**Noah Lynn, our speaker**, was a medical interpreter and an in-house translator for the software company Meditech for several years before recently switching fields. While in the T & I community he chaired NETA's annual conference and then served on NETA's board for two years. He still loves the community, and he uses Google tools every day in his work. He is a graduate of the University of Vermont and earned a Master's Degree in Business Analytics from Bentley University.

### NETA News

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**NETA News** is a quarterly publication of the New England Translators Association. The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and not necessarily those of NETA. We reserve the right to refuse submissions.

#### **Editor**

Terry Gallagher

#### **Layout**

Sarah Heller

#### **Submissions**

Submissions, comments and letters to the editor are welcome. Articles are subject to editing for grammar, punctuation, and space limitations. Upon request, a proof will be sent to you for review.

#### **Schedule of deadlines:**

Fall issue: Sept 30, Winter issue: Jan. 15, Spring issue: March 15, Summer issue: June 15. Please send all correspondence, including requests for permission to reprint articles, to [newsletter@netaweb.org](mailto:newsletter@netaweb.org).

#### **Delivery**

NETA News online edition available at <http://www.netaweb.org>. NETA News is e-mailed to all NETA members. Print copies are available upon request.

#### **Change of Address**

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#### **NETA website contact:**

[webmaster@netaweb.org](mailto:webmaster@netaweb.org)

#### **NETA general online Forum**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NETA/>

To post messages to the Yahoo! Group:

[NETA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:NETA@yahoogroups.com)

#### **NETA political "off-topic" Forum**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/altnet2/>

#### **Look for the NETA Group on LinkedIn at:**

<http://tinyurl.com/ovehyp>

## Membership information

NETA accepts individual members only. A one-year membership is \$50. NETA also offers a \$30 membership for students of translation and/or interpreting. If you need a membership application or have other membership questions, contact: [membership@netaweb.org](mailto:membership@netaweb.org). Subscription to this newsletter is included with your membership.

## Massive Response to Immigration Order

*Continued from page 1*

Finally, on Thursday February 2, the Trump administration amended its visa ban to allow immigration by military interpreters along with their immediate families who had already received clearance to come to the U.S.

The open letter signed by NETA's president was initiated by Red-T, a nonprofit organization "dedicated to the protection of translators and interpreters (T&Is) in conflict zones and other adversarial settings."

The letter to President Trump begins: "As representatives of the national and international community of translators and interpreters, we are greatly alarmed at the implications of your Executive Order on immigration for our colleagues who work in conflict zones. Specifically, we are referring to the 120-day suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and the 90-day entry ban for citizens of seven select countries. Both policies pose an immediate threat to allied interpreters in the theaters of war in Iraq and Afghanistan."

NETA President Diana Rhudick explained that she was approached by Maya Hess of Red T. "I was asked if I would sign an open letter to the President in favor of immigration. I did sign, and have posted the letter to [our website](#). Maya contacted me because I had previously signed a letter for the protection of translators and interpreters around the world, which is also posted on NETA's site."

The quick response to the executive order by the language community was facilitated by having in place the Open Letter Project. Red T, together with the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and the International Federation of Translators (FIT), started the Open Letter Project in 2012. It was a natural outgrowth of Red-T's mission to raise awareness of translators and interpreters subject to unjust persecution, and imprisonment around the world.

Since then, the Open Letter Project has expanded to include the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), Critical Link International, the International Council for the Development of Community Interpreting (CLI), and the World Association for Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI).

For more information about Red-T and their Open Letter Project, go to [their website](#), [Red-T.org](#).

## Petition to urge the UN to protect translators and interpreters worldwide

This petition will be delivered to:

UN Secretary-General António Guterres  
UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson  
MEMBERS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

*Text of the Petition:*

### Request for a Resolution to Protect Translators/ Interpreters in Conflict Situations

Your Excellencies,

I am deeply concerned about the pressing need to protect civilian translators and interpreters in high-risk settings. As recent conflicts have painfully demonstrated, linguists are being injured and killed by the thousands. They have become priority targets of state and non-state actors alike, who view them as traitors and abduct, torture and murder them with impunity.

Protecting this vulnerable population is of the utmost importance. Translators and interpreters are indispensable to international operations of all kinds; by bridging language gaps and fostering communication, they provide crucial support not only during active hostilities but also in post-conflict reconstruction.

Therefore, I am joining the global community of language professionals in urging the UN Security Council to issue a Resolution to Protect Civilian Translators/Interpreters in Conflict Situations. The status quo must not continue; we hope the United Nations will recognize the extreme gravity of the situation and take swift action.

Go to [Change.org](#) to sign the petition.

### Interpreters and Translators join lawyers as volunteers at airports.

There are many stories of interpreters and lawyers volunteering to help those affected by the Trump Administration's Immigration Order. Here are just a few of them:

<https://time.com/4656131/trump-immigration-lawyers-airports/>

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-lax-translators-20170201-story.html>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-01-30/volunteer-lawyers-come-forward-assist-travelers-detained-under-trump-travel-ban>

[http://gothamist.com/2017/01/29/lawyers\\_remain\\_at\\_jfk\\_airport\\_to\\_fr.php#photo-1](http://gothamist.com/2017/01/29/lawyers_remain_at_jfk_airport_to_fr.php#photo-1)

## The Interpreter's Role at a Sexual Assault Intervention Network (SAIN) Interview

**NETA Monthly Meeting, November 19, 2016 • Presenter: Ana Helena Lopes**

*Reviewed by Marian Comenetz*

From the start, Ana Helena Lopes, our speaker at NETA's November monthly meeting, made clear that the discussion would not focus on child abuse itself. That is a topic for specialists. Rather, Ana proposed to describe the interpreter's role at a Sexual Assault Intervention Network Interview (SAIN). With 10 years of experience with the Massachusetts Trial Court, she is also a vendor for the state and works with other state agencies such as the Child Abuse Unit of the District Attorney's office. By now she has been involved with approximately 50 SAIN interviews. She had no prior training for that role, so she has learned from experience and now wants to share her expertise.

A child abuse case can come to light in any number of ways, and any number of different entities can be involved. A child might break down while at school. A mother might bring a child in to a social service office. A social worker might have referred a case to the Department of Children and Families. Or the police might have been called to a house, for example. Community interpreters may well have been involved with a case along the way, but in any event, disclosure will already have happened before the SAIN interview interpreter steps in. Once that happens, the context is legal interpreting, although the roles are not adversarial since the office conducting a SAIN interview exists to serve the victim.

All agencies involved in a SAIN interview scenario come together to coordinate their efforts and investigate the alleged abuse. Aside from a forensic interviewer from the District Attorney's office who will interview the child alone, other parties may be present, for example, an assistant DA, a victim witness advocate, a police detective, and/or a representative of the Department of Children and Families. For this purpose, a child can be anywhere from 3 to 16 years of age. The goal is to do one single interview so as to avoid duplication and to minimize the traumatic impact on the child and the family. The child is told in advance that she/he will be in a safe place, that it's important to tell the truth, and that no one wants such things to happen again.

A SAIN interview consists of several steps. Ana used "the rooms" as a device to explain them.

- The waiting room is where the forensic interviewer (who will be speaking with the child) meets with the child and the family to explain the procedure. This is when the interpreter is introduced and becomes familiar with the case. Sometimes cultural aspects are clarified. Ideally a trust relationship is established. The waiting room is where things get sorted out. But it is essential that the child not say beforehand what happened. That must only happen in the proper context, which is the interview itself.
- The staff room has one-way mirrors. This is explained to the child.

Staff members see the interview conducted by the forensic interviewer and can interact with that person through earpieces. The interview is recorded (both audio and video) since it can be used as evidence if a case goes to trial.

- The interview room is set up to be appropriate for the age of the child (toys, coloring books for younger children). The child, who is always alone, always faces the one-way mirror when being interviewed. The interview generally lasts for 20-30 minutes, after which the child returns to her/his family in the waiting room.
- The meeting room is where either the child alone or the child with parents meet with the individuals who were behind the mirror after the interview, if that is deemed appropriate.

The whole process typically lasts one-and-a-half to two hours.

SAIN interviews are always interpreted consecutively. There are three possible scenarios for the interpreter.

- Sometimes she is not needed during the interview itself because the child knows English. The family, however, may need an interpreter during the pre-interview session. While the child is being interviewed, it is essential that the interpreter avoid speaking with the family. If no other room is available, Ana brings something to do that keeps her fully focused while in the waiting room with the family.
- Stand-by basis can be difficult. The interpreter is present during the interview and never knows at what moment she may be called upon. The child may not know a single word (Ana gave the examples of "living room" and "ejaculate"). In one case the child understood the questions in English but wanted to answer in Portuguese.
- Full participation in the interview has its own challenges. One memorable case for Ana was when the speech

**The goal is to do one single interview so as to avoid duplication and to minimize the traumatic impact on the child and the family.**

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## The Interpreter's Role at SAIN Interview

*Continued from page 4*

of a disabled child was exceedingly difficult to understand. It was necessary to ask for repetition or clarification, and each time, the context would come out in a different way. That can be an issue.

SAIN interviews are inherently a "rough process." Ana highlighted three types of challenges for the interpreter.

1. The subject matter: A huge amount of emotion is implicit in cases of child abuse. Parents can be "really, really upset." The interpreter must detach herself in order to do good work.

2. The age and gender of the child: Especially in cases involving three- and four-year-olds, the child may jump around and not be able to calm down and focus on the core issues, which are extremely difficult. Ana said age can be the biggest challenge. The interpreter's goal is to establish both trust and distance.

3. Cultural differences: Here Ana provided two examples. First, in Brazil, many people are referred to as "auntie" and "uncle" when there is no biological tie. When an abuse situation is described, accurate relationships need to be referenced. In such situations, the family can make things clear later on. The interpreter should not provide clarification.

Second, the language used can be a challenge unto itself. How do children refer to private parts, for example? They are not likely to use correct biological terms. Will they use a slang term specific to their culture (those will vary by region and by country) or a term they heard at school or a term used only at home? Sometimes it's best for the interpreter to use the same word the child used and have the interviewer request clarification from the family after the interview, as necessary. The interpreter should never guess what the child is alluding to. Depending on the situation, the interpreter may need to ask for clarification, but it's very difficult, given the sensitive situation.

SAIN interviews are fraught with emotion. It's important for the interpreter not to interject. The more one detaches oneself from what is happening the better one does the job. One thing is clear and inevitable: the interpreter will be exhausted when leaving the building after a SAIN interview.

## March 1 is the deadline for the 2017 Conference Early Bird Rate

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- localization as a valuable addition to a translator's set of professional skills, what is required to work effectively on a localization team, and how localization needs have changed in recent years with the shift from print-based to web-based formats, presented by Keely Byron, localization engineer.

Topics of interest to interpreters:

- strategies and approaches for interpreters to navigate linguistic and cross-cultural issues that arise in challenging palliative care and end-of-life discussions between patients and healthcare staff, presented by Jessica Goldhirsch, LCSW, MSW, MPH;
- the individual core canons, skills and approaches needed in order to interpret effectively in community, medical and legal situations, presented by Ana Helena Lopez, certified court interpreter.

Look for our final conference preview in the spring issue of the NETA News for more information on other sessions, including presentations by Professor Elizabeth Martin, who will discuss translation practices in international advertising, and Attila Piróth, who will speak about translation internship programs.

The conference will also offer sessions featuring hands-on training and information to help attendees learn more about work opportunities and new technology. As always, the conference will present many opportunities for networking with colleagues and companies who are interested in meeting and working with translators and interpreters and other freelance language professionals.

If you are interested in sponsoring or exhibiting at the conference, there are still some spots open. Go to [netaweb.org/Exhibitor-and-Sponsor-Information](http://netaweb.org/Exhibitor-and-Sponsor-Information) for more information. This year we'll have a room dedicated to exhibitors, as well as time slots for demos or other small group "flash presentations" by exhibitors.

Registration for the conference is now open and discounted early-bird rates are only available through March 1. The link for registration is <http://netaweb.org/event-2394936> and make sure you scroll to the bottom left for the "register" button.

Information on the conference is available at on [our website](#).

Please visit and like [NETA's Facebook page](#) and the [conference Facebook event page](#) for more details and updates as the conference draws closer. We look forward to seeing you at UMass-Boston on May 6!



*Endnote Speaker  
Barry S. Olsen of  
InterpretAmerica, is a  
conference interpreter  
and translator.*

The Endnote Speaker at the upcoming NETA Conference, Barry Olsen, published an essay on January 30 titled "Interpreters in Conflict Zones, Travel Bans and Broken Trust". Read it on his website, [InterpretAmerica.com](http://InterpretAmerica.com).

## NETA's Holiday Party was held December 10, 2016

by Marian Comenetz

It was mighty cold, but we were spared any sign of snow as we made our way to Woburn, where for the third year running, Lesley Andrew's mother kindly hosted NETA's annual holiday party. And a gracious hostess she is! As the first of us arrived, the festive table was ready for the goodies that would be offered,

and plastic snowshoes in the form of dinosaur feet. The satisfaction level with the gifts was so great that a minimum of swapping took place, but when swapping did occur, it was greeted with a cheer! It was nice to see a number of NETA regulars, several NETAn who join in from time to time, and a couple of brand new members all interacting in spirited fashion. People were generous with their food bank donations, too, such that the Woburn food pantry will be

happily resupplied at holiday time.

NETA thanks Mrs. Andrews for her hospitality and Lesley, who multitasked greeting people, handling coats, heating items in the kitchen, and cutting up a delicious ice cream case, among other things. Thanks to our hostesses' efforts, all indications are that a very good time was had by all.



an attractive area was set up for drinks, and the coffee table awaited the items for the Yankee Swap. Before long the kitchen became active as food items were heated up for imminent consumption. NETAn arrived at a steady pace, and conversation took off easily—so much so that it was difficult at first to summon people's attention for the Yankee Swap. Eventually, a large variety of items emerged from their wrapping: a cookbook, a Colombian napkin holder, an elegant candle plus four more with varied scents, chocolates, a kitchen mat, English soap, a decorative seaglass bottle, and a little model of a Ford truck, for example. The most unexpected items may have been an Italian wastebasket, a head scratcher,



Photos taken at the NETA December Party by Diego Mansilla

# Techniques And Suggestions for Working with PDF Files

## NETA Monthly Meeting, January 2017 • Presenter: Bruce Popp

By Marian Comenetz

It should come as no surprise that NETA's January monthly meeting featured Bruce Popp as speaker. After all, this was Bruce's eighth annual presentation, and the reason is clear: he is a skilled user of numerous tech applications and has the fine capacity to share key features with individuals for whom those applications and their various features are new or confusing.

That being said, it is difficult to replicate a tech session in a newsletter article. Naturally it is best if one can attend monthly meetings in person or perhaps remotely. Still, the following bullets are intended to pass on some points that Bruce conveyed.

- There are image-based and text-based PDFs.
- Image-based PDFs have no editable text; text-based PDFs are created through a regular application like Word.
- Upon receipt there might not be an obvious difference between those two versions, but if you cannot select text in a PDF, it is image based. Also, if the document has speckled background with blurred text, then it is image based.
- If you receive a password-protected file (see Security Level), you should ask for the password. You can use OCR (see below) on password-protected files.
- You wouldn't use OCR for text-based PDFs, from which you can select and copy text or images more readily (than from image-based PDFs).

### Using PDFs

The following material is largely geared to PCs. Please note, though, that the PDF Reader Pro app is the Apple equivalent of the paid version of Adobe Acrobat Reader or Nuance Power PDF Advanced, which Bruce uses (see below). It features sticky notes, highlighting (in several colors), strike-through,

and underlining for proofing and editing. It is available at the Apple store.

- To work with PDFs you receive, you have the option of using unpaid or paid versions of Acrobat Reader software.

### Unpaid:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader is free.
- You open Adobe Acrobat Reader to see a PDF. You can sometimes use tools with them and sometimes not (see sticky notes and highlighting below).
- To copy and paste an image from an image-based PDF into a document you're working on in Word, use the selection tool in Adobe Acrobat Reader, select and copy the image and paste it into the new document.
  - If the image is too large in the new document, select it, go to Format, then Size and choose the settings you want; be sure to check the Lock Aspect box, then paste it into the new document. You could just click on the corner of an image and drag to resize it, but there might be some distorting, especially if you inadvertently click and drag from the side of the image rather than from the corner.
- With Adobe Acrobat Reader you can add sticky notes to annotate image-based PDFs so as to share comments with a project manager or a client (this approach is not for working within the text). Adobe Acrobat Reader also has a highlighter (click and drag to use it). It is less neat than when working with text, but it does serve a purpose. You can combine sticky notes and highlighting.
- To delete the sticky note icon, right-click on it and choose delete (clicking on the x won't make it go away), or you can use your keyboard to delete sticky notes or highlighting.

### Paid:

- Adobe has a paid version of Acrobat Reader (they're always encouraging you to purchase it). Other paid PDF readers are also available. Bruce uses Nuance Power PDF Advanced (+/- \$100).
- Paid versions have more features. They may be worth your while, depending on your needs.
- You can insert, extract or delete pages. Bruce was able to extract the four pages he needed out of a 500-page book.
- Since image-based PDFs are not editable, if you want to do more than just view them, you would use Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software to convert such PDFs into editable formats.
- To do OCR, you can use ABBYY FineReader or OmniPage (among other products). One must

**To work with PDFs you receive, you have the option of using unpaid or paid versions of Acrobat Reader software.**

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## Working with PDF Files

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be careful with OCR converters: they generally produce good text accuracy, but the formatting is often a major mess.

- Along with other features, there's an edit menu, a comment menu, and a forms menu (the latter provides the option to count things and add them up).
- Nuance Power PDF has a feature to make image-based PDFs searchable: it uses built-in OCR to add text behind images so you can then search (using Find) in a given file for all places where a given word appears. From the start it's important to indicate which language you're working with.
- Bruce always runs patents in PDF through OCR so he can see all the occurrences of a given word to check for context and consistency. He can then select them and copy & paste into another document, if called for.
- Copying and pasting text from a PDF file may result in losing track of paragraphs, and line numbers, if any, get mixed in with the rest of the text.

### Creating PDFs

- Under normal circumstances, you can create a PDF yourself by going to *Save* or *Save As* in Word and choosing PDF. Or you can do so when clicking on *Print*.
- Of course, the paid version of software also has an option to create a PDF by printing from any application.
- You can use password protection to make a document read-only (e.g., an invoice). However, if you want to password-protect a file, you need the paid version.
- Bruce generates his invoices through QuickBooks, which automatically provides text-based PDFs. This may be true for some other applications, too.
- When using an iPad and working in Pages, when you go to send a copy of your document you have the option to do so in PDF form.
- Scanner App Pro is available in the Apple app store. With that app you can highlight a selected area of a page, save it by taking a picture of it, and then edit it, move images around, and use the contrast and crop features. Then you name the item and save it, using the option to save as PDF, if you like. You can send those documents, too. True, you could just take a photo, but with this app, you can make a number of helpful adjustments.

A final hint: You can do translations of text-based PDFs using Trados. With Trados, the translations are generated in Word. It's not clear whether other CAT tools can function that way.

It cannot be denied that Bruce covered a great deal of ground during NETA's January monthly meeting.

## A Look at the Massachusetts State Audit Report of the Office of Court Interpreter Services

*By Sarah Heller*

On January 24, 2017, Massachusetts State Auditor Suzanne Bump issued an [official audit report](#) entitled "Office of Court Interpreter Services—Review of Scheduling and Payment of Per Diem Court Interpreters for the period July 1, 2013 through May 31, 2015".

"The Office of the Court Interpreter Services plays a critical role in ensuring equal access to justice under the law for individuals who are not proficient in English, or who are hard of hearing. However, they were not taking required steps to ensure payments for those services were properly made," [Bump said](#) of the audit's findings.

The audit period began approximately at the same time that there was a major reorganization of the Office of Court Interpreter Services (OCIS). Until July 2013, the OCIS was largely autonomous within the Trial Court. The audit report states that in August 2013, the OCIS coordinator was removed and management was shifted to the Director of Support Services of the Trial Court. The audit report further states, "The process of paying per diem court interpreters and the OCIS staff responsible for those duties were transferred to the Fiscal Department of the Trial Court under the direction of the manager of Fiscal Affairs."

This history in the report is very dry, as might be expected of a government audit report. Looking through a different lens, however, the leadership of the Massachusetts Association of Court Interpreters (MACI), speaking at the May 2015 NETA Conference, characterized the OCIS reorganization as a "hostile takeover", as reported in the [Summer 2015 NETA News](#). MACI was formed in early 2014 as a reaction to the problems per diem interpreters were encountering in scheduling and payment after the reorganization. The MACI presentation made clear that turmoil and poor communication continued to plague the relationship between interpreters and the OCIS at that time.

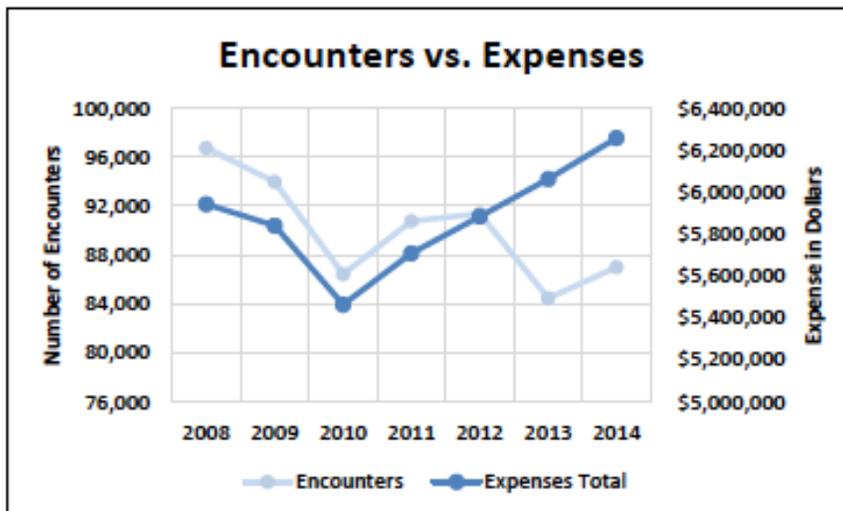
One of the chief complaints of MACI as expressed at the NETA Conference was "Beginning in January, 2014 the Trial Court of Massachusetts has been making concerted moves to reduce the level of interpreter services provided in the court system, and to also reduce the amount paid for these services."

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## A Look at the State Audit Report of the OCIS

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On page 3 of the audit there is a very interesting chart that appears below. The report states: "Between 2008 and 2012, there was a direct correlation between payments for court interpreting services and the number of reported court encounters each fiscal year. That trend changed in 2013 and 2014, when payments for court interpreting services outpaced court encounters." Note that the chart measures Fiscal Years which start in July of the prior calendar year. In other words, Fiscal Year 2013 runs from July 2012 - June 2013. The reorganization, according to the Audit took place in August 2013, at the beginning of FY 2014. It is unfortunate that the chart does not show FY 2015, especially since all but one month of that fiscal year are covered in the audit period. However, the audit report indicates that the divergent trend has continued.



OCIS court encounters reported and associated costs over 7 fiscal years.  
Found on page 3 of the state audit report.

The audit concludes that OCIS is not meeting any of these four objectives:

- 1) Payments made to per diem court interpreters are verified and approved.
- 2) The schedule of per diem court interpreter assignments accurately reflects all interpreter requests made by court locations.
- 3) Per diem court interpreters are used efficiently and paid for the services actually rendered.
- 4) OCIS provides adequate oversight over the interdepartmental Service Agreement with the Mass Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to provide court interpreting services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The report does not indicate that interpreters, either staff or per diem, were interviewed or asked to submit comments to the auditors. Perhaps it is not usual to contact the providers of services when conducting a government audit.

The audit identifies several causes for not meeting the objectives. One primary cause is that the procedures were never updated after the reorganization. The people in charge of payment were transferred to another department and do not have access to the information needed. In addition, the scheduling of interpreters is often last minute and haphazard. The solutions include acquiring better scheduling software, making sure the lists of court liaisons are up to date, revising procedures, and more training for staff.

Finally, and although not part of the listed objectives of the audit, perhaps most significant for per diem interpreters, the report ends with a section entitled *Other Matters* that highlights the issue of paying for wait time (the time when interpreters are on the clock but not providing interpretation services): "Although payments for time not spent actually providing interpreting services are allowed by OCIS, our analysis showed that current OCIS payment policies may result in courts paying for a very high amount of time when they are not receiving any interpreting services."

The auditors reviewed "a nonstatistical sample of 45 payments" and stated: "Our review of these payments indicated that of the 822 hours billed, interpreters were paid for 441 hours interpreting and 381 hours (46% of the total time) waiting to interpret." They go on to highlight one case: "In one instance, on March 2, 2015, an interpreter at the Barnstable District Court was paid \$200 for half a day but was only present at the court for 1.5 hours, of which 1.25 hours were spent waiting to interpret. Effectively, the Commonwealth paid a rate of \$800 per hour for the time the interpreter spent actually providing interpreting services."

The report concludes: "Other professionals involved in the court system such as public counsel are paid for wait time, but the amount of wait time they can be paid for is capped. We do not dispute that it is reasonable to pay court interpreters for wait time. However, in the opinion of the Office of the State Auditor, OCIS may want to revisit its payment policies for per diem court interpreters and consider modifying these policies to limit the amount of time per diem court interpreters can be paid when they are not actually interpreting, which is currently at a rate of half a day or a full day, regardless of the time spent interpreting."

These are just some interesting points taken from the report. Read the audit for yourself at [mass.gov](http://mass.gov) and consider writing your own review for a future issue of NETA News.