

Career Pathways

Community Interpreter Class



Community Interpreter Class

The Need

- Southwest Minnesota has some very diverse counties - it is estimated that there are 84 different languages and/or dialects spoken in Nobles County. Nearly a third of the residents speak a language other than English at home.
- New immigrants rely on interpreters to navigate vital program services including county services, legal services, health services, and assistance with searching and applying for employment.
- With record setting low unemployment rates and a significant labor shortage, employers in the region are hiring more immigrants. They too have a great need for interpreters.
- Many of the Language Line services used are limited, especially when it comes to dialects.

Community Interpreter Class

The Collaborators

- Southwest ABE
- ARCH Language Network - ARCH is licensed through the MN Office of Higher Education to provide TCII (Community Interpreter) training. They are also on the ETPL.
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College
- Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council

ARCH
Language Network



Community Interpreter Class

Classroom Instruction

- Bridge course taught by Southwest ABE.
- ARCH had a one-week, 40-hour training.
- ABE provided one-on-one practice for their Oral Proficiency Interview. This assessment is done in their language and in English.
- Proctored interview and individuals receive a rating in each language. Ratings range from Superior to Novice. They are credentialed in one of four proficiency levels. Law offices/courts and medical facilities often require the highest levels of proficiency.
- Individuals learn ethics and conduct, ethics and interpreter skills, culture and mediation, community services, standards of practice, confidentiality, and have lots of practice.

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Outcome

- The need for interpreters are great - job opportunities with lawyers, clinics, hospitals, schools, community-based organizations, manufacturers and more. Most individuals received pay of \$25 – 30 per hour as certified interpreters with an employer, much more as self-employed contractors.
- While some employment opportunities are not full time, the wages have helped lift individuals out of poverty/additional income, increased professional relationships, and new opportunities.
- Many of our trainees were already interpreting for their extended family and friends, the certificate facilitates getting paid and highlights the value of the service.
- The certificate also gives many individuals the creditability and confidence to become actively involved in the broader professional community.

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Win-Win-Win

- Higher wages for the interpreters.
- Local employers, counties, legal services, social services, health services and other community organizations now have access to in-person interpreters for a greater number of the languages/dialects that were previously unavailable.
- Employers have access to hire an interpreter and gain a whole new labor pool to recruit from
- The community overall becomes more inclusive. For a rural community, this is vital in reducing the barriers for new immigrants to be fully engaged in the community, receiving equal access to services, and gaining the ability to obtain better paying employment.

Alba Mendez

Success Story



Alba now works at KIVU law in Worthington, MN and is fluent in Spanish and English.

“The Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council not only cares about the training, but they also help their trained interpreters to get a job where they can put into practice their knowledge as interpreters.”

“I am very grateful for this opportunity because it helps me to a better job.”