Federal Coordination and Compliance Section

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A *CERTIFIED* LINGUIST?

Translation and Interpretation Procurement Services TIPS

TRUST ME, I'M A *CERTIFIED* INTERPRETER!

WHAT THIS *SHOULD* MEAN:

- Certification documentation should indicate: the certifying or assessment body (e.g., NCSC, NAJIT, FCIP, ILR), any subject area expertise (e.g., medical, conference, or court/legal), the proficiency level (e.g., master, novice, or a number score indicating proficiency), and specific language combination(s) assessed (e.g., Spanish/English).
- Interpreter scored passing marks on assessments in speaking, listening, and/or interpretation performance in the target language(s) and English.
- Interpreter maintains valid certification through continued work training, and/or continuing education credits.
- Interpreter completed a requisite number of hours interpreting.

TRUST ME, I'M A *CERTIFIED* TRANSLATOR!

WHAT THIS *SHOULD* MEAN:

- Certification documentation should indicate: the certifying or assessment body (e.g., NCSC, ATA, NAJIT, ILR), any subject area expertise (e.g., medical, conference, or court/legal), the proficiency level (e.g., master, novice, or a number score indicating proficiency), and the specific language combination(s) assessed by translation testing ***and the direction*** of translation permitted (e.g., Spanish→English, English→Spanish).
- Translator scored passing marks on assessments in reading, writing, and/or translation performance in the target language(s) and English.
- Translator maintains valid certification through continued work training, and/or continuing education credits.
- Translator demonstrated mastery of English grammar and usage in addition to grammar and usage in the target language.

BEWARE – NOT ALL CERTIFICATIONS ARE THE SAME:
IF YOU DON'T ASK, "CERTIFIED" COULD MEAN:

- The linguist received his/her certification years earlier, and has not maintained the certification or his/her language skills.
- The linguist is a practicing interpreter and translator, but is only certified in one skill (e.g., translation, *but not* interpretation).
- The linguist is certified in one field (e.g., medical), but is *not certified* to provide language services in the required field (e.g., legal).
- The linguist is not certified, but is instead "registered," "licensed," or "qualified" by the certifying body through a less rigorous process.
- The translator is certified in only one language direction (Spanish→English), and is *not certified* to translate in the other (English→Spanish).
- The linguist received his/her certification, without training or prior experience, from an online open-book exam (or other unsuitable assessment).
- The linguist received an inadequate certification that did not assess the necessary skills (e.g., the "certified translator" was never assessed in reading)

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CERTIFIED LINGUIST:

- ☐ Are you a certified translator? Interpreter? Or both?
- ☐ What did your certification process entail?
- ☐ Which certifying authority or organization granted the certification?
- ☐ In which language(s) or language combination(s) are you certified?
- ☐ Are there any limitations to your certification?
- ☐ How much experience do you have interpreting/translating?
- ☐ Are you required to maintain your certification with experience or continuing education?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LANGUAGE SERVICES VENDOR:

- ☐ What baseline qualifications do you require your linguists to have?
- ☐ How often do you assess your linguists or vet their work?
- ☐ How do you determine whether a linguist is qualified for a job?
- ☐ Do you keep records of client complaints?
- ☐ How do you address client complaints?
- ☐ How do you verify your linguists have and maintain certification?
- ☐ What remedy do you offer clients if a linguist makes an error?
- ☐ What happens to a linguist if he/she has made substantial errors?