

CONSUMER HOW-TO BEGIN A CAREER IN COURT REPORTING

Court Reporting: Flexibility, Independence and Security

Growing Profession Has Expanded Beyond Courtrooms to Technology World of Realtime

With advances in technology, today's court reporters are information managers who work in the legal community and can also provide instant communication access for people with hearing loss. Growing well beyond the courtroom, the field of court reporting continues to expand. In fact, The Occupational Outlook Handbook 2008-2009, released by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) says that court reporter employment will grow by 25% through 2016. Considering the current job market and all the downsizing that is taking place, the growth in this profession is astounding.

Court reporting is a career field with benefits such as flexible work schedules, diversified career avenues and financial security. Recently, Forbes.com included court reporting among its report of "Surprising Six-Figure Jobs," noting a national median salary of \$64,000 annually, "though it tops \$100,000 in many cities."

Court Reporters are highly valued by attorneys and the court system, as well as by broadcasting companies, which are required by law to have television programming captioned for the 28 million Americans who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. Broadcast captioners

work for local stations and national networks captioning news, sports, entertainment, events, emergency broadcasts, and other programming. Thanks to the technology, much of this work can be done remotely.

Schools and businesses also rely on trained court reporters for "real-time" capturing and transcripts of lectures, speeches and meetings. CART reporters provide instant "realtime" conversion of spoken words to readable text for the estimated 10 percent of the population who are hearing-impaired and can benefit from captioning and these services. Because these services comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), CART professionals are more prevalent in classrooms, businesses, or anywhere immediate access to communication is needed.

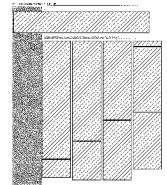
Traditionally, when people think of court reporters they envision someone sitting in a courtroom typing on an unfamiliar device known as a stenography machine. While the profession is slowly gravitating away from the "traditional" idea of court reporters, there are many who still choose to be in the middle of the courtroom action. Typing at over 225 words per minute, court reporters play an essential role and are highly valued by the legal community as "guardians of the record"—transcribing court proceedings. With a consistently replenishing supply of fresh law suits and cases, courtroom reporters work on topics that

run the gamut. The options are limitless and the benefits are great. In fact, a 2006 NCRA survey determined that for court reporters working for local, state or federal courts and agencies, the average net income after expenses was \$72,072.

One of the major perks of the Court Reporting field is the ability to freelance. Many court reporters work as independent contractors for court reporting firms by taking depositions prior to trial or capturing proceedings outside of the courtroom. Freelancing gives court reporters the amazing flexibility of being their own bosses. In addition to setting your own hours, freelancers have the ability to earn a lot of extra income. According to a Yahoo.com story on Six-Figure Jobs without a Professional Degree, "document backlogs in certain cities have pushed overtime pay for court reporters to record levels. The court reporter who adds freelance transcribing for private depositions and business meetings to a base income can crack \$100,000 per year." Needless to say, opportunities for freelancers are plentiful and flexible.

The Right Time to Begin a Career in Court Reporting

With increased technology opening up even more avenues for court reporters and more court proceedings than ever, now is the time to begin a career in court reporting. Interestingly, while the field is expanding at a rapid pace, the



number of students training to become court reporters has decreased. According to the National Court Reporters Association, the number of people graduating from NCRA-certified schools is down over 60% over the past decade, and the number of NCRA-certified schools is down as well. In fact, Orleans Technical Institute is the only NCRA-approved court reporting program in the tri-state area. Earning an Associate in Specialized Business Degree, court reporters head out into the job market with the skills to succeed.

Court reporters continue to be in-demand, a trend that grows stronger each year. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor asserts that job prospects for court reporters are excellent, as job openings continue to outnumber jobseekers and employment prospects grow much

faster than average.

Opportunities in this hidden profession are endless and flexible—court reporters can travel or work remotely from home. They can work for businesses or anywhere immediate access to communication is needed, such as conventions, press conferences, seminars, board meetings, and more. Now is the time to join this growing field.

Court Reporting Fast Facts

- Court reporters, including deposition reporters, earn an average of more than \$64,000 a year (based on a five-year average) with potential to earn over \$100,000.
- Salaried positions for broadcast captioners can range from \$45,000 to \$75,000, and independent contractors can earn from \$36,000 to more than twice that amount, depending on the number

of on-air hours. CART reporters can earn between \$35,000 and \$65,000 per year.

- There are an estimated 50,000 court reporters in the United States and only about 27 percent actually work in court. The majority are freelance reporters hired to create verbatim transcripts of pretrial depositions of potential trial witnesses.
- Federal rules require captioning of hundreds of hours of live programming each week, creating a surge in career opportunities for people with the right skills.

Source: National Court Reporters Association (www.ncraonline.org), the primary advocacy and information group that serves the court reporting and captioning professions.

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