

## I. ACCESS AND FAIRNESS

### A. Will stereotypes or bias play a role in how I am treated in court?

No. Stereotypes and bias based on race, gender, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation and economic status have no place in the treatment of people or the handling of cases in the courts.

You have the right to be treated with fairness, respect and courtesy by everyone you encounter in the legal system. If you feel you have not been treated fairly and respectfully, you should speak up.

In turn, you have the responsibility to treat everyone you encounter in the legal system with fairness, respect, and courtesy. Behavior that is disrespectful toward the court or any individual involved in the court process will not be tolerated.

### B. If I have a disability, will accommodations be made for me?

Yes. The Massachusetts courts do not discriminate on the basis of disability. Parties, lawyers, employees, and members of the public are entitled to access all court programs, activities, and services without regard to disability.

Each court has designated an employee to be the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator. Please contact the court before your court date if you anticipate that you will require an accommodation in order to gain access to the court building or to fully participate in any court proceeding or service.

### C. If I need an interpreter, will one be provided?

Yes. Everyone in the Commonwealth has the right to equal access to the courts and the right to the assistance of a court interpreter throughout any legal proceeding.

If you have a limited ability to understand or speak English or are hearing impaired, you should ask that an interpreter be appointed for you as early in the process as possible. It is the judge who will appoint or accept an interpreter. The most important thing the judge will consider is how well you speak and understand English.

A court interpreter is a trained professional who speaks your language and will interpret exactly what you say and what is said to you. The interpreter will keep everything said confidential and will remain impartial, without forming or expressing any personal opinions about your case.

A court interpreter cannot give you legal advice, explain things to you or have personal conversations with you. If you require assistance completing a court form, the court interpreter can “sight translate” the form. The court interpreter cannot, however, explain the meaning of terms or assist in making calculations on a form. The court interpreter may only translate the words that appear on the form.

The Trial Court’s Office of Court Interpreter Services provides free professional court interpreters for all court proceedings. Sometimes, it will take time to arrange for a court interpreter and your case will need to be postponed to a date when a court interpreter is available.