

**ENSURING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL: BEST PRACTICES FOR REPRESENTING LIMITED
PROFICIENT CLIENTS**

FACULTY BIO

Mary Keane Vilter, Esquire serves as Coordinator for Court Access at AOPC. Mary leads the efforts of the Unified Judicial System in complying with Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act and the Pennsylvania Interpreter Act. Mary coordinated the Language Access Advisory Group appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to write a Language Access Plan for the UJS, and now assists the Monitoring and Evaluation Team charged with implementing the Plan. In addition, Mary regularly presents continuing education programs for judges, court administrators, attorneys, and interpreters. Mary previously worked in the AOPC's Legal Department for almost 9 years, from 1992-2000, representing the courts and judges of the Commonwealth in federal civil rights and employment law matters. Mary has significant background in Americans with Disabilities Act and Limited English Proficiency issues. She served as the first full time executive director of the Legal Clinic for the Disabled in Philadelphia and later as a board member and board chair. She worked with deaf and hard of hearing consumers at the Center on Hearing and Deafness in Chester County, and volunteered for several years with the Volunteer English Program of Chester County. Mary worked in private practice with Ubel Velez, Esq., representing the Latino community in Chester County in workers compensation, immigration, and criminal defense matters. Mary graduated from Tufts University *magna cum laude* and obtained her juris doctor degree from the Washington College of Law, American University.

Gabriela (Gabby) Raful, Esquire is a Partner at Galfand Berger, LLP, where she represents injured clients in the areas of workers' compensation, personal injury, and products liability. She practices law in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Gabby is active with the Berks County Bar Association, where she sits on the Board of Directors and serves as Chair of the Minority Law Section. The section's purpose is to promote full and equal participation of minorities in the justice system. Because of her contribution to community, and her extensive *pro bono* work, the Berks County Bar Association awarded Gabby its 2017 Presidential Award of Merit. In 2017, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court appointed Gabby to the AOPC's Monitoring and Evaluation Team to implement and evaluate the Language Access Plan for the Unified Judicial System. In their role, the group makes certain that the courts remain open to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or people who speak other languages. In 2018, the Pennsylvania Bar Association selected Gabby for the Pennsylvania Bar Association (PBA) Leadership Institute Class of 2018- 19. Gabby is one of only 11 attorneys chosen for this class. In addition, she is the first attorney from Berks County honored with this selection. Gabby is also a frequent lecturer on workplace and personal injuries and is a contributing author. She is originally from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic and thus, speaks Spanish. Gabby Graduated from Kutztown University *magna cum laude* and obtained her juris doctor degree from Widener University School of Law.

Sonia Schlamowitz is the Chief Court Interpreter and Language Access Coordinator for the County of Berks. Sonia is a seasoned interpreter with 20 years of experience as a staff interpreter for Berks County. She attained the State Certification when it first became available in Pennsylvania in 2009. As the Language Access Coordinator, she is the contact person for the public, court staff, and the AOPC concerning language access, and as the chief court interpreter, she oversees interpreter operations for the judicial courtrooms and provides assistance for a wide range of judicial departments. Sonia is always seeking opportunities to advance her profession in order to improve upon the coordination of services provided to the LEPs in her district. Sonia is an active member of the National Association of Judiciary Interpreters and is currently working on her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration at Alvernia University, with plans to seek a Master's Degree in Linguistics. Sonia holds her certification as an ESL instructor, volunteering teaching ESL classes to adult learners. She is also involved with the Berks County Chamber of Commerce *Mujer a Mujer* organization, a forum for strategically advancing Latina professional women with the goal of creating more female leaders, and the Greater Reading Immigration Project.