

Careers

58%

Proportion of adults in a recent survey by Medco Health Solutions who said participation in a health plan was the best choice among possible employee benefits. The next option, a \$500 salary increase, was cited by only 14 percent.



Court Reporter

MARGARY ROGERS, 28

JOB: Official court reporter at D.C. Superior Court

SALARY: \$62,880, plus \$15,000 to \$20,000 in transcript fees

EDUCATION: Bachelor's in court reporting from Johnson & Wales University, in Providence, R.I.

WHAT SHE DOES: Rogers takes verbatim notes on everything that's said during trials, including disruptions in the audience. Her tools: a stenotype machine (which looks something like a tiny electric typewriter with unmarked keys) and a personalized dictionary of shortcuts, "almost like a code," for words and phrases that come up often. Keys comprising shortcuts are pressed simultaneously (one six-key combo enters "ladies and gentlemen of the jury"), then the codes are instantly translated into



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English by a laptop connected to the stenotype. Outside the courtroom, attorneys will sometimes order copies of her transcripts, for which she's paid separately. Rogers pays

a person called a "scopist" to edit transcripts for grammar, punctuation and to fill in missing words. (Some reporters do this themselves, but if you're in court all day, having a scopist is the "only way you can really have a life," she said.) Creating a good transcript is as much mastering the stenotype as it is a state of mind — specifically being able to kick it into autopilot. "We're hearing but we're not listening," she said. "And that's the art of court reporting. If you listen, you'll miss something because you're thinking about it."

WOULD YOU WANT HER JOB? Not if you can't handle pressure. "Besides the judge," said Rogers, the court reporter is the most important person in the room. "We have to get the record." That means asking the judge to make lawyers slow down and soft-spoken witnesses speak up. "Most times we have to fight for ourselves, because if anybody questions the record they come back to us." It also means typing at breakneck speeds — Rog-

ers clocks in at around 225 words per minute. And of course there are concerns for health issues stemming from all that typing. "Most of us have insurance on our hands," she said.

HOW YOU CAN GET HER JOB: Rogers worked as a freelance court reporter before getting her job, and said the training is also applicable to related fields, such as captioning. According to a recent posting for the D.C. court system (dccourts.gov), applicants need to have completed a court reporting program approved by the National Court Reporters Association (ncraonline.org) and two years of work experience. Approved schools are listed on the NCRA site, and a spokesman said some offer distance learning.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Visit the NCRA site for job listings and advice on getting started. Jobs in federal courts can be found through the United States Court Reporters Association (uscra.org) and uscourts.gov. **DANNY FREEDMAN (EXPRESS)**



LIVE ONLINE

Life at Work

AMY JOYCE's column appears Sundays in The Washington Post. She chats every Tuesday at 11 a.m. on washingtonpost.com/liveonline.

I took a new job at the end of January, and I absolutely hate it. I especially hate the people. I have a solid work history before this little blip on the radar screen. How flaky would it look if I started looking for a new job?

Look for a new job. Life's too short. If you're asked why you're hoping to move on, explain that the environment didn't fit the way you like to work, and tell them why their environment would. Of course, you can also get into the issue of why your skills would fit a different job so much better.