



Citizens Jury Project Report April 2009

Summary

In April of 2009, the Citizens Jury Project (CJP) of the Fund for Modern Courts operated Ombudservice booths in nine (9) courthouse locations in New York City and Westchester for six to twelve hours per week.¹ The primary goal of CJP interns is to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. In April, 564 jurors approached the booths (or used the virtual ombudservice online), with 590 questions or comments.

This report identifies common questions asked and comments made to interns at each site. Inquiries about the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse were the most common juror questions at six (6) CJP sites in April 2009.² At two (2) sites, there were an equal number of questions regarding a) location, and b) procedure and what jurors are allowed/required to do. At the remaining courthouse, the greatest number of questions concerned procedure.

Recommendation from jurors this month include:

- in addition to the existing wi-fi, install plug in ports;
- expedite the payment process to make people feel like they are valued;
- the television screens should display the names of jurors, instead of the clerks calling out the names of people;
- put on the summons the minimum number of days to be served; and,
- there should be small lockers for jurors.

New York County

60 Centre Street: During April, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 118 jurors with 125 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (83). Seventeen (17) questions had to do with postponement/difficulty with jury service. Thirteen (13) questions

concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. One juror offered several appreciative comments, which appear as an endnote.³

100 Centre Street: During April, 73 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 78 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (47). Thirteen (13) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Six (6) late jurors approached interns. There were three (3) questions about qualifications to serve. A juror offered the appreciative comments that, “I am a fan. It’s my day off, I have my check book and my bills. The chairs are very comfortable and the people are very friendly.”

111 Centre Street, 3rd floor: During April, 59 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 62 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned a) the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (18), and b) procedure/what jurors could/were required to do (18). One (1) juror suggested that, “*We need plug in ports in addition to the wi-fi.*”

111 Centre Street, 11th floor: During April, 68 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 72 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned a) the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (21) and b) procedure/what jurors could/were required to do (21). Nine (9) late jurors approached interns. Three of the four (4) juror suggestions received included: “*They should put on the summons that we should be here a minimum of two days. They should clearly articulate that. I didn't know I had to be here that long.*”; “[*There should be*] lockers where I could put my stuff at for lunch.”; and, “*I feel sad when I enter the room. There needs to be brighter colors to uplift the mood.*”

Kings County

320 Jay Street: During April, 23 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 25 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (9). Seven (7) questions were related to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. There were three (3) juror complaints: “*Why do we have to get here early if they do not start on time? I do not think it is fair that I got here at 8:30 and nothing started until after 9:30AM.*” A juror was upset about there not being a sign out sheet when the clerks said they were going to put one out, and another said that it should not take so long to get paid, and that the state should expedite the process to make people feel like they are valued.

360 Adams Street: During April, 73 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 75 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (25). Twelve (12) questions came from jurors who arrived late. Nine (9) questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse. There were six (6) computer questions, and four questions in regard to postponement and difficulty with jury service. A juror complained that, “*The computers are not working.*” Another suggested that, “*The television screens should display the names of jurors, instead of the clerks calling out the names of people. It will make things a lot easier for those who come in late, etc.*”

Bronx County

215 East 161st Street: During April, 111 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 114 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (51). Twenty (20) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Seventeen (17) questions concerned qualifications to serve. CJP recommends consideration of additional signage, in multiple languages, in regard to juror qualifications. Addressing jurors in more than one language during orientation might also be helpful; for more on this suggestion, see the September 2008 CJP report, available on <http://www.moderncourts.org/cjp/Reports/cjp.html>.

Queens County

Kew Gardens: During April, 20 jurors approached interns with 21 questions. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (13).

Westchester

111 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd: During April, 17 jurors approached interns with 17 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (8). There were four (4) questions in regard to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.

¹ While booths are generally in operation from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, three days per week, there are exceptions. In the Bronx, jurors are called twice each week, and so the booth there is operated two days per week. In Brooklyn, interns arrive after the court's orientation (as requested by court personnel). Interns work until lunch time, when most or all jurors leave the courthouse. Lunchtime varies, but often begins before 1 p.m. Additionally, interns occasionally report that jurors have been discharged early, meaning, of course, that there is no one left to approach them.

² Examples of questions about location include: "Where can I get lunch/coffee/a newspaper?"; "Where are the restrooms/water fountains/elevators?"; and "Where is the subway/post office?"

³ The appreciative comments were:

[I'm] currently in the jury pool area and I must say it is rather a not so unpleasant task. The internet access/vending machines/phone availability all make the day go by. The chairs are actually not uncomfortable. Kudos for getting rid of a great deal of the drudgery of this important task, and the facilitator who has shown a great deal of patience on all the repetitive concerns/questions. Again, great job.