



## **Citizens Jury Project Report May 2009**

### **Summary**

In May 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.<sup>1</sup> The primary goal of CJP interns is to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. In May, 613 jurors approached the booths (or used the virtual ombudservice online), with 637 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 eight (8) CJP sites in May 2009.<sup>2</sup> At one (1) site, the greatest number of questions concerned procedure.<sup>3</sup>

Recommendations from jurors this month include:

- the TV's in the front of the juror rooms should be used to display the names called;
- there should be more explanation as to why jurors are waiting; and,
- there should be healthier foods in the vending machines.

### **New York County**

**60 Centre Street:** During May, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 125 jurors with 130 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (72). Forty-one (41) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Twelve (12) questions had to do with postponement/difficulty with jury service. One (1) juror offered several appreciative comments: she liked the way everything was presented, including the video, which she thought was clear. The juror also thought that the clerks were very nice.

**100 Centre Street:** During May, 67 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 70 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (46). Eight (8) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Five (5) late jurors approached interns.

**111 Centre Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor:** During May, 145 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 150 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (65). Forty-one (41) questions were asked in regard to procedure/what jurors could/were required to do. Fourteen (14) questions had to do with postponements and difficulty serving, and seven (7) late jurors approached interns. Two (2) jurors offered suggestions: *“They [court personnel] should use the TV’s in the front of the juror rooms to have the peoples’ names they call scroll down the TV.”*; and, *“They should explain to the jurors why they are sitting and waiting.”* Another juror made the appreciative comment that, *“Jury duty is well organized.”*

**111 Centre Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor:** During May, 106 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 110 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (37). Thirty-five (35) questions were asked in regard to procedure/what jurors could/were required to do. Nine (9) late jurors approached interns. Six (6) questions had to do with postponements and difficulty serving. One (1) juror said that, *“The directions on the summons were bad.”* Another commented that, *“They shouldn’t have people cramped in there like this, especially with this swine flu going on.”* Still another suggested that, *“They should have healthier stuff in the vending machines.”* A very contented juror said, *“You wanna know how I feel about jury duty? I think it’s awesome. It’s like a mini-vacation away from work and we get paid for it.”*

### **Kings County**

**320 Jay Street:** During May, 29 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 31 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (11). Five (5) questions were related to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Two (2) jurors were upset about the TV’s not working. A juror commented that jury service is a good experience - everybody should participate to learn from it, and understand how the system works. Another juror mentioned that several of the computers were not working.

**360 Adams Street:** During May, 68 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 71 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (16). Fourteen (14) questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse, and fourteen (14) questions came from jurors who arrived late. Five (5) questions were in regard to postponements and difficulty serving. One (1) juror made the appreciative comment that the jury system had improved its efficiency, and that it was now easier to work because it was quieter. Another juror said that several of the computers were not working.

## **Bronx County**

**215 East 161st Street:** During May, 39 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 40 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (33).

## **Queens County**

**Kew Gardens:** During May, 20 jurors approached interns with 21 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (11). Four (4) questions related to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Two appreciative comments were received: *“I love the improvements that were made to the jury room, a whole new atmosphere.”*; and, *“I am surprised that jury service went so smooth[ly]. The staff is very polite.”*

## **Westchester**

**111 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd:** During May, 14 jurors approached interns with 14 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (4). One (1) juror complained that, *“The seats and benches here are uncomfortable.”* Another said that he had served jury duty at other courthouses in New York City, as he had moved a lot, and this courthouse was the best place that he had served.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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?"

<sup>3</sup> Generally, such questions include "Can I leave? Is there a sign-out sheet?"; "When is lunch?"; "Can I use my cell phone/smoke/eat here?"; "How long does jury service last?"; and "Will I get something proving I served?"