



## **Citizens Jury Project Report January 2008**

### **Summary**

In January of 2008, the Citizens Jury Project (CJP) of the Fund for Modern Courts operated Ombudservice booths in nine (9) courthouse locations in New York City 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 January, 567 jurors approached the booths with 568 questions or comments.

This report identifies common questions asked and comments made to CJP at each site, along with suggestions for improvement where appropriate, and a set of general recommendations.

Inquiries about the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse were the most common juror questions at four (4) CJP sites in January of 2008. At the remaining four sites, non-jury questions, complaints, comments by late jurors and questions about computers were, respectively, the most frequently asked question or comment. At one location, no juror questions or comments were recorded.

### **General Recommendation:**

1. **Updated Signage or Guides:** Modern state-of-the-art signage using visually-familiar icons would benefit many jurors. Signage should be located in frequently-trafficked areas.<sup>2</sup>

### **New York County**

**60 Centre Street:** During January, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 103 jurors with 104 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (62 inquiries).<sup>3</sup> **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room by the clerk's desk and by the elevators.*

**100 Centre Street:** During January, 67 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 67 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (41).<sup>4</sup> **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room by the entrance (where reading materials are offered) and outside the general assembly room by the CJP Ombudservice booth.*

**111 Centre Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor:** During January, 24 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 24 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked were asked by non-jurors(6).<sup>5</sup> Additionally, there were five (5) complaints.<sup>6</sup> **Recommendation:** *No specific recommendations are made at this time due to the low number of comments received.*

**111 Centre Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor:** During January, the CJP Ombudservice booth addressed comments from 11 jurors, who approached with 11 questions and comments. The comments most frequently made were complaints (3).<sup>7</sup> Out of the 11 comments received, 2 were appreciative ones.<sup>8</sup> **Recommendation:** *No specific recommendations are made at this time due to the low number of comments received.*

## **Kings County**

**320 Jay Street:** During January, 53 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 53 questions and comments. CJP noted that fourteen (14) jurors were late and spoke to interns, primarily asking where to go and what to do. Apart from these questions asked by late jurors, two categories tied for second most frequently asked question, procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (11)<sup>9</sup> and questions concerning the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse.<sup>10</sup> **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room and by the elevators.*

**360 Adams Street:** During January, 44 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 44 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (14).<sup>11</sup> The second most frequently asked questions came from late jurors (8). **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room.*

## Bronx County

During January, 238 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 238 questions and comments. The most common questions (109) concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse.<sup>12</sup> There were sixty-two (62) late jurors who approached interns.<sup>13</sup> **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room along the side of the room and directly outside the jury room by the CJP Ombudservice booth. In addition, given the large number of late jurors, Bronx County should consider a dedicated entrance for jurors who are often detained in the general security line.*

## Queens County

**Kew Gardens:** During January, no jurors approached interns at this location.<sup>14</sup>

**Jamaica:** During January, CJP interns recorded 24 questions and comments from 24 jurors. Questions about the computers were the most frequently asked question at this location (11).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Booths are generally in operation from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, three days per week; the Bronx booth is operated two days per week. Due to intern unavailability, the Queens booths were also open two days per week, at most.

<sup>2</sup> CJP has been informed that the 2008 OCA budget requests include signage for each facility in NYC. CJP has been invited “to do a walk through” with OCA representatives when OCA begins its review, probably in late April.

<sup>3</sup> The following are examples of this type of question: “There’s a lunch room in there?”; “Where can I get coffee?”; and “Where is 111 Centre street?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>4</sup> The following are examples of this type of question: “Where is the water fountain?”; and “Where is the elevator?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>5</sup> Non-juror questions included: “Do you know where the motions court is located?”; and “I am supposed to appear for a bench trial. Do you know if I am in the right place?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>6</sup> Complaints included: “It is freezing in here. They should turn on the heat.”; and “Why isn’t there enough room in the jury assembly room?” Interns referred comments to court personnel where appropriate.

<sup>7</sup> The following is an example of a complaint received: “Not enough benches on the fifth floor. I have to be [*sic*] standing for an hour.”

<sup>8</sup> One appreciative comment was: “I am thankful you (the intern) are here. I can definitely see that Judith Kaye has made the process of jury duty better. You are making a difference being here. Jurors are not visible. The clerk is very positive and he gets the day going.

<sup>9</sup> Examples of questions concerning procedure included: “When is lunch?”; and “I was discharged, now what do I do?” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

<sup>10</sup> Questions concerning location included: “Where can I find a deli around here?”; and “Where can I get

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Coffee?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>11</sup> Questions in this category included the following: “Where is the post office?” and “Where are the elevators?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>12</sup> Questions in this category included: “I’m already on a case, where do I go?” and “Where is room 313?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

<sup>13</sup> An intern who frequently operates the booth at this courthouse reported in early March that delays in entering the building are shorter now that the new Bronx courthouse has opened. The new facility opened at the end of January. The data for February has not yet been analyzed.

<sup>14</sup> One “Queens intern” worked on special projects during January, including a review of the Kew Gardens courthouse. The booth at this location was therefore not staffed as many days as usual. Additionally, it was reported by another intern that the court was very quiet. Even so, no juror comments is very unusual, and something CJP is watching.

CJP is unsure why no questions or comments were recorded.

<sup>15</sup> Computer questions included: “Can I print?” And “Do you have Wi-Fi service?” Interns provided answers regarding computer use.