



**Citizens Jury Project Report
May 2007
Summary**

In May 2007, the Citizens Jury Project (CJP) of the Fund for Modern Courts operated Ombudservice Booths in eight courthouse locations in New York City,¹ in order to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. During this period, 596 jurors approached CJP with 674 questions or comments. The booths were staffed by trained interns from six to twelve hours in the mornings each week.

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 facilities and amenities (restrooms, food and beverages, etc.) were the most common juror questions at five (5) CJP sites in May 2007. At a sixth courthouse, at 60 Centre Street, the most common questions were whether jurors were in the right place to serve; in four (4) other courthouses, this category of questions ranked second. At a seventh courthouse, at 320 Jay Street, Brooklyn, the most common questions sought information about postponements or difficulties with service. At the eighth courthouse, in Jamaica, jurors most frequently asked whether there were computers and internet access.

General Recommendations:

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.
2. **Additional language assistance:** (a) Counties should consider automated multilingual juror help lines, using state-of-the-art multilingual mailbox messaging. (b) On its homepage, nyjuror.gov should include multiple-language links, describing qualifications and legitimate reasons for postponements and excusals. (c) Jury summons should add abbreviated multilingual notices of Internet or phone information.

New York County

60 Centre Street: In May of 2007, the CJP Ombudservice Booth interacted with 70 jurors who approached with 78 questions and comments.¹ The most common questions concerned the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse (44 inquiries). Jurors frequently inquired whether they were in the right place; the second largest category of comments (6 questions). **Recommendation:** See *General Recommendation 1, at the beginning of this report.*

100 Centre Street: In May of 2007, 162 jurors approached the Ombudservice Booth with 184 questions and comments.² The most frequent questions concerned the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse (61) or information about the location of jurors' assigned service room (31). **Recommendation:** See *General Recommendation 1, at the beginning of this report.*

111 Centre Street, 3rd floor: In May of 2007, 56 jurors approached the Ombudservice Booth with 62 questions and comments.³ The largest category concerned the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse (11), followed by questions about the location of the assigned service room (9). **Recommendation:** See *General Recommendation 1, at the beginning of this report.*

111 Centre Street, 11th floor: In May of 2007, the CJP Ombudservice addressed comments from 34 jurors, who approached with 35 questions and comments.⁴ The most frequently asked questions were questions about the location of the assigned service room (9). See *General Recommendation 1, at the beginning of this report.*

Kings County

320 Jay Street: In May of 2007, 162 jurors approached the booth and raised 188 questions and comments.⁵ The largest number of inquiries sought information about postponements or commented on difficulties with service (35), citing a variety of issues, ranging from health matters to financial hardship or schooling demands. Nineteen (19) jurors asked for information about the location of jurors' assigned service. Eighteen (18) jurors inquired about qualifications for service, with 10 of those expressing concerns about difficulties with the English language. Other questions were about the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse (11). **Recommendation:** Identify opportunities for improved communication about postponements and excusals, and review clarity of summons on the qualifications for service. See *General Recommendations 1 and 2.*

¹ In May of 2007, 1,745 jurors reported for service at 60 Centre Street.

² In May of 2007, 2,513 jurors reported for service at 100 Centre Street.

³ In May of 2007, 2,138 jurors reported for service at 111 Centre Street, 3rd Fl.

⁴ In May of 2007, 1,733 jurors reported for service at 111 Centre Street, 11th Fl.

⁵ In May of 2007, 4,673 jurors reported for service at 320 Jay Street.

Bronx County

In May of 2007, 36 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice Booth with 37 questions and comments.⁶ The most common questions (25) concerned the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse. **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1, at the beginning of this report.*

Queens County

Kew Gardens: In May of 2007, CJP staff recorded 72 questions and comments from 59 jurors.⁷ There was a notable increase in the number of jurors approaching the booth – only 17 approached in April. The most frequent questions (26) concerned the location of facilities and amenities within the courthouse. The CJP booth is on the way to the restrooms, and it may be that in asking interns about the facilities, they are asking for confirmation of what they already know. No recommendation is necessary at this time.

Jamaica: In May of 2007, 16 jurors approached the booth with 17 questions and comments.⁸ The most frequent questions (7) had to do with whether there were computers and internet access. CJP believes that the low number of juror comments and questions is due to two factors: 1) the CJP booth has been relocated to the back of the jury room, out of sight for most jurors; and 2) clerks have not been announcing that the intern is there, and available to take questions, comments, complaints and suggestions.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ 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.

The booths in New York County (60 Centre Street, 100 Centre Street and 111 Centre Street (3rd & 11th Floors)) are generally staffed on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. The booth in Bronx County is generally staffed on Mondays and Wednesdays. The booths in Kings (320 Jay Street) and Queens (Kew Gardens and Jamaica) County are generally staffed on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

ⁱⁱ After several discussions with court personnel, the last taking place in early August, CJP has been told that announcements will be made whenever an intern is at the booth in Sutphin. CJP hopes this step will make interns more accessible to jurors than they have been in recent months.

⁶ In May of 2007, 4,260 jurors reported for service in the Bronx.

⁷ In May of 2007, 1,870 jurors reported for service in Kew Gardens.

⁸ In May of 2007, 2,559 jurors reported for service in Jamaica.