



Citizens Jury Project Report November 2007

Summary

In November 2007, 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.¹ The primary goal of CJP interns is to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. In November, 622 jurors approached the booths with 635 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 seven (7) CJP sites in November 2007. At one (1) CJP site, the questions asked most frequently concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. At the ninth (9th) courthouse, questions about the computers were the most common juror question.

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. **Post Instructions and Distribute Information:** Posters featuring diagrams and instructions for completing the juror questionnaire would benefit jurors. Posters should be displayed in juror lounges and in the general assembly areas. CJP is preparing a draft of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for each courthouse, to address common questions about procedures (e.g. where jurors are permitted to use their cell phones) for OCA approval. Interns also will refer jurors to the Petit Juror Handbook and nyjuror.gov which have FAQ sections.

- 3. Provide Additional Information/Instructions About Computer Use:** The results of an OCA WiFi surveyⁱⁱ revealed that most jurors are unaware of the availability of wireless internet prior to arriving for service. Information about the availability of WiFi in jury rooms should be added to nyjuror.gov and should be included on the summons where possible. Signs should be posted in juror computer lounges with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and responses. Common computer questions could also be addressed by court clerks during orientation.

New York County

60 Centre Street: In November, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 28 jurors with 31 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (13 inquiries).ⁱⁱⁱ **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: In November, 131 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 135 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (77).^{iv} **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, 3rd floor: In November, 28 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 28 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (8). The second most frequently asked question concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (7).^v **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendations 1 and 2 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room. Instructional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room by the clerk's desk and in the juror lounge.*

111 Centre Street, 11th floor: In November, the CJP Ombudservice booth addressed comments from 49 jurors, who approached with 49 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (18).^{vi} **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room.*

Kings County

320 Jay Street: In November, 67 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 67 questions and comments. Twenty-eight (28) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.^{vii} Eleven (11) jurors asked about postponing service and/or referred to difficulties in serving. **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 2 at the beginning of this report. Instructional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room by the clerk's desk and in the juror lounge.*

360 Adams Street: In November, 121 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 121 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (44).^{viii} The second most frequently asked question concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (37).^{ix} **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendations 1 and 2 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room. Instructional signs should be placed inside the general assembly room by the clerk's desk and in the juror lounge.*

Bronx County

In November, 171 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 172 questions and comments. The most common questions (89) concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse.^x There were twenty-two (22) late jurors who approached interns, and sixteen (16) jurors who asked about postponing service and/or referred to difficulties in serving. **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.*

Queens County

Kew Gardens: In November, 17 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 22 questions and comments. The most common questions (12) concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse.^{xi} **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room.*

Jamaica: In November, CJP interns recorded 10 questions and comments from 10 jurors. Questions about the computers were the most frequently asked question at this location (5).^{xii} **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 3 at the beginning of this report. An announcement addressing common computer questions (location, permitted use, time limits) during orientation would answer the majority of juror questions.*

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.

ⁱⁱ CJP interns conducted a survey from October 10th through November 9th, 2007 at the courthouses referred to in this report, except the Bronx, in part to evaluate juror awareness of WiFi access. In response to the question: “Did you know that there was WiFi access before you came to jury duty?”, of the 125 jurors who took part in the survey, sixty-seven (67) answered 'Yes' and fifty-seven (57) answered, 'No'. One (1) juror said 'Maybe, I don't know.' Of the sixty-seven (67) participants who were aware of WiFi access before reporting for jury duty, almost half had learned of WiFi availability from a friend, spouse/partner or other relative. More than one-quarter found out about the access by calling the automated phone line. The full summary of the survey results is available at www.juryproject.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ The following are examples of this type of question: “Is there a pharmacy nearby?”; “Where is the closest train around here?”; and “Where is the bathroom?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

^{iv} An example included the following: “[Where is the] cafeteria?” Intern provided directions to juror.

^v Examples of questions concerning procedure included: “Do we have to stay here overnight if we get picked to be a juror and are deliberating on a case?”; “How does the process of jury duty work?”; and “What time is lunch?” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

^{vi} Questions concerning location included: “Do you have coffee downstairs?” and “Where is the men’s room?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

^{vii} Examples of questions concerning procedure included: “I just came back from voir dire process; should I just sit here and wait?”; “How do I know if my name was called?”; and “This is my second day here and I was told it’s only one day in Brooklyn. [Please explain].” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

^{viii} Questions in this category included the following: “Where is the empanelling area?”; “Is there a nearby Chase Bank?”; and “Where are the elevators?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

^{ix} Examples of questions concerning procedure included: “How many days is jury duty?”; “Is this an all day thing?” and “I need to change my address and the summons has an old address [what do I do]?” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

^x Questions in this category included: “Where are the pay phones?”; “Where is the restroom?”; and “Where do I go to postpone?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

^{xi} Nine (9) jurors inquired about the location of the restrooms.

^{xii} Computer questions included the following: “Can you print from the computers?”; “Do I need a login name to sign on?”; and “Do computers have internet access?” Interns provided answers to jurors.