



Citizens Jury Project Report October 2007

Summary

In October 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, who service these booths, is to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. In October, 763 jurors approached the booths with 772 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 facilities (restrooms, water fountains, etc.), amenities (food and beverages, etc.) and rooms or offices were the most common juror questions at five (5) CJP sites in October 2007. At two (2) CJP sites, the questions asked most frequently concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. At the eighth (8th) courthouse, inquiries about the location of facilities, amenities, rooms or offices and questions about what jurors could/were required to do tied for most common juror question asked. At the ninth (9th) courthouse, complaints, computer questions and miscellaneous questions tied for the most frequently made comment or question asked.

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 in the process of drafting a FAQ sheet for each courthouse to address common questions about procedures (e.g. where jurors are permitted to use their cell phones). Interns also will refer jurors to the Petit Juror Handbook and nyjuror.gov which have FAQ sections.

New York County

60 Centre Street: In October, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 102 jurors with 102 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices (51 inquiries).² **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 October, 135 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 139 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices (64).³ **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 October, 22 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 23 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices (11).⁴ **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed outside the general assembly room.*

111 Centre Street, 11th floor: In October, the CJP Ombudservice booth addressed comments from 87 jurors, who approached with 87 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices (36). **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 October, 88 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 90 questions and comments. Forty-six (46) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.⁵ **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 October, 147 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 148 questions and comments. Sixty-two (62) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.⁶ **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.*

Bronx County

In October, 151 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 151 questions and comments. The most common questions (88) concerned the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices.⁷ **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 October, CJP interns recorded 23 questions and comments from 22 jurors. Two concerns tied for most frequently asked question or comment: inquiries into the location of facilities, amenities and rooms or offices and questions concerning procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.⁸ Each concern had six (6) questions or comments recorded. All questions concerning location were asked by jurors who were looking for the restrooms. **Recommendation:** *See General Recommendation 1 at the beginning of this report. Directional signs should be placed in the general assembly room.*

Jamaica: In October, nine (9) jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with nine (9) questions and comments. Three inquiries tied for most frequently asked question or comment: complaints,⁹ computer questions¹⁰ and miscellaneous questions¹¹ each had two (2) questions or comments recorded. Due to the low number of questions or comments in each category, no recommendations are made at this time.

¹ 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.

² The following are examples of this type of question: “Is there a place to eat?”; “Where do they sell papers?”; and “Where do I go to volunteer for jury duty?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

³ An example included the following: “Do you know if there's a North Fork Bank around here? Post Office?” The intern consulted the CJP lunch guide which includes information on surrounding facilities and gave the juror directions.

⁴ Questions in this category included the following: “Is there a cafeteria or snack bar around?”; “Where is 60 Centre Street?”; and “Is there a place where I can get coffee?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

⁵ Examples of questions concerning procedure included: “Do we get a lunch break? Do we have to sign out for lunch?”; “My name was called, where do I go?”; and “I received a summons in the mail, but I had already served [what do I do]?” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

⁶ Questions in this category included the following: “Do I have to wait until they call my name?”; “What do you do if you're called back to voir dire and not selected?”; and “I don't know if my employer pays while I'm on jury duty.” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

⁷ The following are examples of this type of question: “Is there an ATM in the building?”; “Where are the public phones?”; and “Where is room 313?” Interns provided directions to jurors.

⁸ Examples of procedural questions included: “Where can I use my cell phone?”; “Can I go outside?”; and “Do I get a paper saying that I was excused from serving jury service?” Interns explained procedures to jurors and provided additional direction where needed.

⁹ The following complaint was received at the Jamaica location: “The process is too long, especially when lawyers choose their jurors. They need a better strategy to pick out jurors so that it can be quick and convenient.”

¹⁰ Computer questions included the following: “The computer locked me out, what should I do?”, and “Can I use the computer?”

¹¹ The following is an example of a miscellaneous question: “What is the purpose of the CJP Booth?”