



Citizens Jury Project Report February 2010

Summary

In February of 2010, 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 February, 448 jurors approached the booths (or used the virtual ombudservice online), with 466 questions or comments. The courts were closed for Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays and additionally due to inclement weather. These closures may have impacted the number of comments received.

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 February 2010.² At one (1) site, the greatest number of questions concerned procedure.³

New York County

60 Centre Street: During February, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 72 jurors with 75 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (53). Six (6) questions concerned postponement or difficulty in serving, and six (6) were about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.

100 Centre Street: During February, 45 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 47 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (31). Ten (10) questions were asked in regard to postponement or difficulty in serving. Three (3) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. One juror said that he believes jury duty has gotten much better, because [in the past] he had served for up to six days without being selected for a trial.

111 Centre Street, 3rd floor: During February, 12 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 12 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).

111 Centre Street, 11th floor: During February, 91 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 94 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (58). Twelve (12) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do, and six (6) were in regard to postponement or difficulty in serving. Five (5) late jurors approached interns with questions.

Kings County

320 Jay Street: During February, 17 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 18 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (6). Five (5) jurors asked about the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse. Three (3) questions had to do with postponements or difficulty serving.

360 Adams Street: During February, 40 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 42 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (27). Five (5) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.

Bronx County

215 East 161st Street: During February, 80 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 81 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (30). Twenty-nine (29) questions were asked regarding procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Thirteen (13) questions concerned postponements and difficulty in serving. Four (4) questions were related to qualifications to serve.

Queens County

Kew Gardens: During February, 16 jurors approached interns with 16 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (10). Two (2) questions were in regard to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.

Nassau County

Mineola: During February, 74 jurors approached interns with 76 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (51). Seven (7) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Six (6) questions were asked regarding qualifications to serve. Appreciative comments included: A juror said that serving was a much better experience than when he last served. The juror believed [the process] was more organized. Another juror commented that *“the guest speaker judge lightens the mood of the day. This was a better experience.”*

Virtual Ombudservice Comment

One Bronx juror contacted CJP complaining that she had called the courthouse the night before the snowstorm, and was informed that she had to serve. She went to the courthouse, and it was closed.

Another juror, called to serve at 111 Centre Street (the floor was not specified) said that the court personnel had a good sense of humor, and that the facility was clean.

¹ 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. CJP began operating in Minneola this month.

² 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?"

³ 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?"