

# Your guide to Jury Service

An obligation and an honor





## Dear Prospective Juror:

On behalf of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our courts for jury service.

This handbook has been provided to you to answer general questions about serving as a juror in a Connecticut Superior Court. Please keep in mind that the information in this booklet does not take the place of instructions you may receive from a judge. If you are selected to serve on a case, please listen carefully to the judge's instructions.

Many people who go through the selection process will not be chosen to serve on a case. This happens for a variety of reasons and is no reflection on any individual's background or perceived abilities as a juror. Whether or not you are selected to serve on a case, you are fulfilling a vital role in the judicial process by being a part of the pool of jurors. A large jury pool is the best guarantee of the Judicial Branch's ability to provide fair and impartial jurors in our courtrooms, and even if you are not questioned during the day, your very presence in the courthouse often prompts the parties to settle their cases without going to trial.

The Connecticut Judicial Branch has taken a number of steps to make jury service more convenient and rewarding. Many of these changes are a result of suggestions from jurors themselves. If you have a suggestion or comment about your jury service, please notify the jury clerk in the district where you serve, or contact Jury Administration directly at 1-800-842-8175, via email at [jury.administration@jud.ct.gov](mailto:jury.administration@jud.ct.gov) or write to them at the following address:

Superior Court Operations  
Jury Administration  
Attention: Jury Administrator  
P.O. Box 260448  
Hartford, CT 06126-0448

We recognize that jury service interrupts other important obligations in your life and we greatly appreciate the sacrifice that jury service often entails. Please know that our jury system is possible because people like you are willing to serve. We are grateful for your participation and we will do everything we can to make your service pleasant, interesting and meaningful.

Very Truly Yours,



Richard A. Robinson, Chief Justice  
Connecticut Supreme Court



# JURY SERVICE AND YOU

## How was I selected to be a juror?

Each year, a list of potential jurors is created by combining names from four lists. These lists are:

1. licensed motor vehicle operators from the Department of Motor Vehicles,
2. registered voters from the Central Voter Registry of the Secretary of the State,
3. state income tax payers from the Department of Revenue Services and
4. individuals who received unemployment compensation from the Department of Labor.

The four lists are combined and duplicate names are removed. Individuals are randomly selected for jury service from the list created by this process. As jurors are needed, they are mailed summonses that contain information on how to respond.

This handbook has been mailed to you because you are scheduled to come to court for jury service and have not been excused or disqualified by the Jury Administrator.

## **When and where must I report for jury service?**

The date and time, along with the court name, address and other information, are printed on your reminder notice, which is enclosed with this booklet.

You should be at court no later than the time on the reminder notice and be prepared to stay at the courthouse until 5:00 P.M. If you are dismissed before 5:00 P.M., your employer may require you to return to work to complete your regular shift. Please talk to your employer before your jury service date to find out what the policy is where you work.

## **What should I do if I have children?**

Children are not allowed to come with you when you report for jury service. Childcare is not available at the courthouse. If you cannot find childcare, or come to court as scheduled, please contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175.

## **What if I am breastfeeding?**

If you would like to request an accommodation, such as a private room to express milk, or would prefer to defer your jury service to a date within ten months of your original date, please contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175 or by email at [jury.administration@jud.ct.gov](mailto:jury.administration@jud.ct.gov). While requests for accommodation do not have to be made in advance, it will help ensure that your needs are met on the day of your service.

## What if I have a disability and need assistance?

If you have a disability, including deafness or hearing impairment, and need a reasonable accommodation to perform jury service, please contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175 between 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M., Monday through Friday or via email at [jury.administration@jud.ct.gov](mailto:jury.administration@jud.ct.gov).

You may visit the Judicial Branch ADA website for more information at [www.jud.ct.gov/ADA/default.htm](http://www.jud.ct.gov/ADA/default.htm).

## About your reminder notice

The reminder notice that came with this handbook contains special instructions about your service. It will tell you to call your assigned court any time after 5:30 P.M. on a specific date to find out whether or not you will have to come to court. The pre-recorded message is available all night and on weekends.

*Important! Call the court only on the date and after the time on the reminder notice.*

If the recorded message tells you not to come to court for jury service, you will have completed your jury obligation *only for the remainder of the court year of your original summons date*. A court year begins on September 1 and ends on August 31.

If you are told to come to court, you must do so. If, for any reason, you are unable to make telephone contact with the court or have any questions about the message, assume you must come to court for jury service.

## How long must I serve as a juror?

You will be required to come to court for jury service for at least one full day. If you have not been selected for a trial or questioned by the judges and attorneys by the end of the day, you will have completed your jury service unless the court orders differently.

If you have been selected for a *jury panel*, but have not been questioned by the judge and attorneys by the end of the day, you may be required to return the next day. A court employee will tell you whether you need to come back to court for another day. If you are selected for a trial, you must serve as a juror until the end of the trial.

## How often can I be called for jury service?

You are required to come to court for jury service only once within four court years. (A court year runs from September 1 to August 31.) If you have completed jury service within three years of your appearance date, you may ask to be excused based upon your previous service.



## **What if I can't report for jury service?**

You are expected to be at the courthouse on the date and time printed on the summons, unless you get a special notice telling you something else. If you have an emergency and you cannot come to court on your assigned date, call the Statewide Juror Information number, 1-800-842-8175 (Mon. through Fri., 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.). If necessary, you may be assigned a new date for jury service.

## **How do I get to the courthouse?**

Directions are on the Judicial Branch website at [www.jud.ct.gov/jury/Parking](http://www.jud.ct.gov/jury/Parking).

## **Should I bring lunch?**

You may bring your own lunch. There are refrigerators and microwave ovens at the courthouse. Jurors who prefer to eat out will find that there are restaurants near most courthouses.

As a reminder, only plastic knives, forks and spoons are allowed in the courthouse.

A complete listing of amenities available at each courthouse is available by visiting the Judicial Branch website at [www.jud.ct.gov/jury/accom](http://www.jud.ct.gov/jury/accom). If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175 and speak with a customer service representative.

## **What if the weather is bad?**

Call your assigned court location at the number listed on the reminder notice for more information if court is delayed or cancelled. You may also listen for an announcement on the radio or television. In addition, delays or cancellation information is displayed at the top of the Judicial Branch website at [www.jud.ct.gov](http://www.jud.ct.gov). Unless you are informed by the court that you do not need to appear or hear an announcement on the radio or on television, you must come to court for jury service.

## **What if I have an emergency while I am a juror?**

In an emergency, the judge can excuse you at any time during the trial. If your family must contact you in an emergency, they should call the courthouse and explain the situation. The judge will be notified and will decide if you should be excused.

## **Are there any items I should not bring to court?**

Jurors may not bring disruptive or potentially dangerous items into the courthouse.

A disruptive item includes, among other things, electronic items such as a portable radio, television, CD, MP3, tape player or camera not attached to a cell phone or computer.

Potentially dangerous items include, among other things, weapons of any kind, pocket knives and sharp objects such as tools or knitting needles. If you have any questions about what to bring, contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175.

## What about cell phones and other electronic devices?

A juror *may* have any of the following electronic devices inside a state court building:

- A cell phone;
- A camera cell phone;
- A personal computer with or without video or audio recording capabilities;
- A digital or tape audio recorder;
- A personal digital assistant (PDA) with or without video or audio recording capabilities;
- Any other electronic device that can broadcast, record or take photographs.

A person *may not* use a cell phone or any other electronic device to take pictures, take videos, make sound recordings, broadcast sound, or broadcast still or moving images inside a court facility.

Cell phones can only be used to make phone calls and may not be used during jury orientation, during jury deliberations, or in any court room. You may not photograph or record any proceeding. If you have any questions, contact Jury Administration at 1-800-842-8175.

## **Will I be paid for my jury service?**

Yes. All full time employed jurors (those normally required to work at least 30 hours per week) are paid their regular wages by their employer for the first five days of jury service. Beginning on the 6th day of jury service, all jurors are paid \$50.00 per day by the state, regardless of their employment status.

Unemployed jurors and jurors employed part time are reimbursed for expenses for the first five days of jury service. Reimbursements are allowed for expenses including mileage, bus fare, child and family care. The cost of meals is not reimbursable. Reimbursement for expenses cannot be less than \$20 or more than \$50. Receipts are required for individual expenses greater than \$25. (Payment may take up to three weeks to process.)

## **How will my employer know how I have served as a juror?**

At the end of your jury service you will be sent a Juror Service Certificate with a copy for your employer. Trial jurors will receive an updated service certificate at the end of their trial. The certificate will state the dates of your service as a juror and inform your employer of the duty to pay you. This certificate should be given to your employer as soon as possible. If you need proof that you served as a juror before the certificate is mailed, contact the jury clerk.

## **What if my employer cannot pay me?**

You will be sent a waiver application with your Juror Service Certificate. The waiver application is for the employer to ask to be excused from having to pay you. Your employer should file the waiver application at the court location where you served within 15 days of getting it. If your employer is excused from paying you, the court will pay you the amount of your regular wages up to \$50 per day.

## **What will happen when I get to court?**

When you first enter the courthouse, you will go through a metal detector. You will be asked to put personal belongings in a tray and your handbag, briefcase or other objects may be put through an x-ray machine. This is for the security and safety of everyone in the courthouse. You will then be directed to the jury room where your attendance will be recorded. If you have not completed your confidential juror questionnaire on eResponse prior to your appearance date, you will be directed to a kiosk to complete the questionnaire.

The jury clerk will give you important information about how you will be paid, general information such as the location of bathrooms and vending machines and when there will be breaks. A judge will give a formal orientation. You will be asked to watch two short videos. One will describe the jury selection process and the other will discuss unconscious bias.

You will be given a chance to discuss any urgent problems with court personnel at this time.

## **Will I automatically be put on a case?**

No. You may be randomly selected for a jury panel, which is a group of people from the jury pool. The people selected for the jury panel will learn details about the case, including the names of parties and attorneys involved in it. If you have conflicts because you know about the case, the parties or the attorneys or because of the trial schedule, you will have an opportunity to talk about these conflicts.

Each juror in the jury panel may then be questioned individually in an interview process known as voir dire (pronounced vwar deer).

## **What is the purpose of the interview?**

The purpose of the interview is to determine any prejudices or biases jurors may have about a case. Please remember that the attorneys are trying to determine whether you can be fair and impartial and they are allowed to ask probing questions.

It is very important that you answer all questions honestly and accurately, but you also may object to answering any questions that you think are too personal or too probing.

## How many people will be on the jury?

Juries are made up of 6 to 12 people with additional or alternate jurors.

## What is the difference between a civil case and a criminal case?

A civil case usually involves a dispute between two or more parties in which one is seeking to enforce private or personal rights. In a civil matter, the complaint is brought by a *plaintiff* against a *defendant*.

A criminal case is one brought by the State of Connecticut against a person accused of a crime. The charge against the defendant in a criminal case is usually prosecuted by a State's Attorney. In a criminal case, the State is called the *prosecution* and the person accused of the crime is called the *defendant*.

## THE TRIAL

A judge will preside over the entire trial, maintaining order and deciding what law applies. The judge will also instruct the jury at various stages in the trial. The jury must follow the judge's instructions carefully. Your role as a juror will be to decide the facts after hearing the testimony of each side. You will then apply the law, as explained by the judge, to arrive at your verdict.

At the beginning of the trial, the jury is sworn in. Each attorney may make an opening statement which outlines the case and what the party intends to prove.

Attorneys will question witnesses.

Sometimes, private conferences will take place between the lawyers and the judge to discuss a technical or legal issue. They are a common courtroom procedure. The attorneys may approach the bench where the judge is sitting, or in some cases, the judge will excuse the jury from the room. The jury is excluded from these conferences to avoid the possibility of confusion or wrongful influence.

When all the evidence has been presented, each attorney will summarize the evidence by giving a *closing argument*.





## ARRIVING AT A VERDICT – WHAT HAPPENS?

After the closing arguments, the judge instructs the jury on the law by giving what is called the *charge to the jury*. The judge will state the law that applies in the case and explain the procedures to use in reaching a verdict. The jurors must follow the judge's instruction on the law in deciding the case. Following the judge's charge, the jury will enter a private room for *deliberation*. Deliberations are secret. The jury will first elect a *foreperson* to preside over the deliberations. The jurors will then discuss and evaluate the evidence. All jurors should have the opportunity to express ideas and opinions on the case. If jurors aren't clear about the judge's charge or any matters of law, the foreperson may send written questions to the judge.

You will be instructed that all of the members of the jury must agree on the verdict. If the jury cannot reach a unanimous verdict, the judge must be notified. A marshal or other court employee will bring your message to the judge.

Once the jury reaches a unanimous verdict, the foreperson will send a note to the judge and the verdict will be taken in open court.

# JUROR'S CONDUCT

Certain rules and procedures have been set up to help you to be fair and impartial in serving as a juror.

Following these rules is vital to the judicial process. Any violation of these rules could result in a mistrial or an order of the court setting aside the jury's verdict. In both instances, there will have to be another trial.

- 1.** Arrive on time for each session of court. If you are going to be late, please call the number you will be given at the time you are selected to be a juror.
- 2.** Pay careful attention to all the evidence introduced at trial. You must decide the case only on the evidence presented at the trial and the instructions on the law that the court gives you.
- 3.** You cannot discuss, describe or communicate any information about the case or related to the case with anyone, including the other jurors, until the court tells you that you may do so. Anyone includes your family, friends, or any witness, attorney, or party involved in the case. The term "discuss, describe and communicate" includes all types of oral and written communications including electronic communications such as e-mail, blogging, texting, twittering and posting on social networking sites such as Facebook.

4. You cannot do any research or investigation of any kind, including on-line research, about the case, any issue of law or fact you believe is involved in it, or trials and trial procedure.
5. Do not read, watch or listen to any reports or accounts of the trial or any reports or accounts of any issues involved in the trial by anyone in any form of media, including newspapers, radio, television or on-line media. The information may not be accurate or relevant to the case.
6. The reason for rules 3, 4 and 5 is to prevent you from forming an opinion on the case before all the evidence is in or relying on information that is outside of the evidence. You should notify the court if anyone makes any comment to you about the case or any issue involved in it or if anyone attempts to contact you about the case.
7. You may take notes in the courtroom only if the judge tells you that you may do so.
8. Do not watch other trials being conducted in the courthouse.
9. Do not attempt to do your own research on the law or the case.

- 10.** Wear your juror identification badge in full view whenever you are in the courthouse. This badge will identify you to lawyers, judges, witnesses and other court personnel, and alert them not to discuss cases within your hearing range.
- 11.** Listen calmly and carefully to opinions of others in the deliberation.
- 12.** Use discretion in selecting your attire. Decorum is maintained in the courthouse; please dress accordingly.

If you have questions before serving as a juror, some common legal terms are available at our website at: <http://jud.ct.gov/legalterms.htm>



## PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING DETAILS:

- You have confirmed that you will be coming to court by confirming on eResponse, emailing, or by telephone.
- You have told your employer of the day that you will be at court for jury service.
- You have **called the courthouse** the evening before the day you are scheduled to come to court.
- You have completed your confidential juror questionnaire online through eResponse. If you do not have internet access, you will have the opportunity to complete the questionnaire at the court at one of the available kiosks.
- You have discussed any urgent problems with our jury staff.

### How Can We Help?

Phone, eResponse, email, mail, or fax –  
we are here for you.



eResponse



Toll Free: 1-800-842-8175  
(Mon-Fri, 8 A.M. to 6:00 P.M.)

IVR: 1-844-970-1918

Email: [jury.administration@jud.ct.gov](mailto:jury.administration@jud.ct.gov)

Mail: Jury Administration  
P.O. Box 260448  
Hartford, CT 06126-0448  
Fax: 860-263-2770

We look forward to seeing you.





The Judicial Branch of the State of Connecticut complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you need a reasonable accommodation in accordance with the ADA, contact a court clerk or an ADA contact person listed at [www.jud.ct.gov/ADA](http://www.jud.ct.gov/ADA).



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