

## Frequently Asked Questions about Juror Service in New Jersey

**WARNING: Please note that the New Jersey Judiciary Jury Management Office does not contact jurors to request personal or financial information by telephone or e-mail.**

### JURY SERVICE IN GENERAL

#### **1. Why is it important that I serve as a juror?**

Jurors are an essential part of our justice system. The right to trial by jury in the United States dates from Colonial times and is rooted in English history. It is guaranteed by the Sixth and Seventh Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America and Article One of New Jersey's State Constitution. People have a right to have matters determined by a jury of their peers. Participating in our judicial system is not only an honor, but is also one of our civic duties. Although juror service may be inconvenient, citizens must participate in the jury process in order for it to work. Cases that go to trial need to be resolved by citizens who hear the evidence, determine the facts and render a verdict. It is impossible to get a fair cross-section of the community to participate in the jury system if people do not report for jury service. If you ever found yourself or a loved one involved in a civil or criminal trial, it's likely that you would want a jury of fellow citizens who will be fair and impartial.

#### **2. What lists are used as the source for jurors?**

The Judiciary is required by statute to create a single list for juror selection that combines names of registered voters, licensed drivers, filers of N.J. personal income tax returns, and applicants for homestead rebates. The Judiciary vigorously reviews the names to ensure that each person has only one listing in the source file. Citizens can assist that process by using their legal name when filing relevant forms and checking to ensure that all information, including address and identifiers, is accurate.

#### **3. How are prospective jurors selected to be summoned?**

Juror selection is a random process. Prospective jurors are selected by computer in no particular order. Because each eligible record has the same chance of being selected at any time, some jurors are summoned more frequently. In accordance with the statutory excuse grounds and in order to broaden service among those on the list, a juror's name is made ineligible for selection for three years after service.

#### **4. Why do I seem to get summoned frequently but others don't?**

Because each eligible record in the source file has the same chance of being selected at any time, some jurors are summoned more frequently. If you believe that you have been summoned within the past three years in the same county and want to be excused on that basis, please note that information on your qualification questionnaire when you return it to the Jury Management Office. If possible, please provide the date you served and, if different, your name at the time you served. Your prior service will be reviewed.

#### **5. What should I do if I have lost my juror questionnaire / summons?**

If you misplace your juror questionnaire / summons, you should immediately telephone the Jury Manager in your county. A list of Jury Managers and their telephone numbers are included on the Judiciary's internet site at [www.njcourts.com](http://www.njcourts.com). Click on the Juror Information link located in the box on the right side of the screen.

#### **6. How should I respond if I receive a questionnaire / summons addressed to a person who is deceased?**

It sometimes happens that a juror summons is issued in the name of a person who is now deceased. The Judiciary regrets any such instances but they can occur due to the nature of the records that are required to be included for juror service selection and to the timing of the receipt and processing of those records. The Judiciary works to limit the number of such incidents, including by obtaining records from local offices of vital statistics.

If you receive a juror questionnaire / summons addressed to a person who is deceased, we would appreciate it if you would return the questionnaire, noting (in the area intended for change of name or address) that the person to whom it is addressed is deceased. Also please provide (at that same location on the form) the date of death and your relationship to the deceased. Then please provide your name and sign the questionnaire on the signature line marked by the X in the white box on the bottom panel of the yellow questionnaire. That line provides for the signature of the "prospective juror or the person completing form".

That action will allow the Judiciary to make the record ineligible for selection and to retain the response for record-keeping purposes. The Judiciary appreciates your assistance in responding in this way.

## **THE JURY SYSTEM**

### **7. What are the different types of juror service for which I might be summoned by the New Jersey Judiciary?**

You may be summoned for one of three types of jury service. You may be summoned to serve as a Petit Juror, a Grand Juror, or a State Grand Juror.

- Petit Jury service includes criminal and civil trials. Petit jurors who sit on a criminal trial decide guilt or innocence in a criminal matter. Petit jurors who sit on a civil trial decide liability or damages.
- Grand jurors determine whether there is sufficient evidence to move forward with criminal charges against a defendant.
- State Grand Jury and county grand jury operate similarly but the State Grand Jury has statewide jurisdiction and representation and meets in Trenton rather than one of the county seats.

Please also be aware that you may be summoned to serve as a federal petit juror or grand juror in U.S. District Court. Such service is independent of N.J. Superior Court jury service. Federal courthouses are located in Newark, Trenton, and Camden.

### **8. Does recent service as a federal juror affect my scheduled service in the NJ Superior Court?**

The three year excuse does not apply to federal jury service. Recent service as a federal juror does not automatically relieve you from your petit jury civic obligation but you should include that information on your juror qualification questionnaire and provide verification of your federal jury service. It may lead to your service being rescheduled.

### **9. Does recent service in another state excuse me from serving in New Jersey?**

Recent service in another state does not excuse you from serving in New Jersey. Please be aware that it will take some period of time for your name to be added to the four lists that provide names for random selection as jurors. You may also request a postponement [for up to a year] of your scheduled service.

## **JUROR QUALIFICATION / DISQUALIFICATION**

### **10. What are the qualifications to serve as a juror?**

In order to serve as a juror in N.J. you must meet the following six qualifications set forth in N.J. statutes (*N.J.S.A. 2B:20-1*). The first six questions on the juror qualification questionnaire ask about these criteria. You must be truthful in responding to these important questions:

- **NJ RESIDENT** -You must reside in the summoning county at the time and during the period of your juror service. If you moved, you must list the new address on the form and enclose proof of your new residence.
- **US CITIZENSHIP** -You must be a citizen of the United States. Temporary or permanent legal residents of the United States are not eligible to serve.

- **PHYSICAL / MENTAL CONDITION** - You must be physically and mentally able to perform the functions of a juror, noting that the Judiciary will provide accommodations consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you suffer from a medical condition that is unlikely to change within a year, and this condition prevents you from serving jury duty, you must submit a doctor's note indicating that you are unable to perform jury duty. Please fill out the questionnaire, sign it, attach the doctor's note and return it to us as soon as possible. The doctor's note must be written on your doctor's letterhead and signed by your doctor. Requests written by jurors to be excused for medical conditions without verification from a doctor will be denied.
- **INDICTABLE OFFENSE** - You must not have been convicted of an indictable offense. Note that only individuals who have been convicted or pled guilty to an indictable offense are disqualified from jury duty. Please indicate any criminal record in response to question #4, noting the criminal charge, the year and the state involved. The Jury Management Office will verify that the information you provide is accurate.
  - Examples of persons who would be disqualified are anyone who was convicted of, or pled guilty to, a crime in Federal Court or Superior Court; or anyone currently on PTI (Pre-trial Intervention Program.)
  - Examples of persons who would qualify to serve jury duty are anyone whose only convictions are in Municipal Court (most traffic violations fall into this category, as do most shoplifting charges;) or anyone who has been accused of a crime but has not yet been convicted or has yet to enter a guilty plea.
  - Also, traffic offenses, juvenile and DWI related offenses that occurred in New Jersey are not grounds for disqualification.
  - You are not disqualified with respect to criminal record if you successfully completed a Pre-Trial Intervention program (PTI) for an offense and have not been convicted or pled guilty to another disqualifying offense.
- **AGE** - You must be at least 18 years of age on the date that you are scheduled to serve jury duty. However, if you are 75 years of age or older, you may be excused from jury duty at your request, in accordance with statutory grounds for excuse from juror service without requiring documentation of a medical condition or other grounds for excuse.
- **LANGUAGE** - You are required to be able to read and understand English. Many people who do not speak English as their first language fear that they will not be able to understand what is going on in a courtroom. However, the English spoken during a trial is not much different than the English people speak at home, at work and among friends. If you speak English at work, you will most likely qualify to be a juror. However, if you feel that your knowledge of the English language is not sufficient to perform the duties of a juror, you must provide that information on your qualification questionnaire and return it to the Jury Management Office. We will make a decision based on the information you provide to us.

## **PERMISSIBLE EXCUSES**

### **11. What are the reasons for which I can request to be excused from service?**

The N.J. statutes set forth, in *N.J.S.A. 2B:20-10*, grounds for which a person can request to be excused from juror service. Each of these grounds is listed on the uniform juror questionnaire/summons. In most instances, you will be required to submit supporting documentation for the Jury Management Office to determine whether to grant your excuse from jury service. Many jurors who request to be excused instead have their service rescheduled to a more convenient time which accommodates the juror's circumstances. You may request to be excused from jury service if:

- **You have a medical inability to serve as a juror.**  
If you suffer from a medical condition that is unlikely to change within a year, and this condition prevents you from serving jury duty, you must submit a doctor's note indicating that you are unable to perform

jury service. The doctor's note must be written on your doctor's letterhead and signed by your doctor. Requests written by jurors to be excused for medical conditions without verification from a doctor will be denied.

- **You are an active member of a volunteer fire department, fire patrol, first aid or rescue squad.**  
If you are a volunteer firefighter or volunteer member of a first aid or rescue squad and want to be excused on that basis, you must provide verification that you are an active member. A letter from your supervisor or a photocopy of your identification card with that group may be sufficient documentation.
- **You are 75 years of age or older.**  
There is not an upper age limit to serve as a juror. You must be at least 18 years of age to serve. However, if you are 75 years of age or older, you may be excused from jury duty at your request. No medical excuse is required. In order to be excused, you must complete the Juror Qualification Form and check the box on the juror summons that reads: PLEASE EXCUSE DUE TO AGE 75 OR OLDER. Please write your age in the space provided and return the form to the Jury Management Office.
- **You care for a minor child, or a sick, aged, or infirm dependent and have no alternative care available without suffering severe financial hardship.**  
When requesting to be excused for any of these circumstances, keep in mind that the Jury Management Office will grant you time to arrange for alternative care. In order to be excused from jury service due to any of these circumstances, you must submit the proper documentation that indicates your role in the individual's daily care.
- **You provide highly specialized technical health care services for which replacement cannot reasonably be obtained.**  
In order to be excused under this ground, you must provide verification of your expertise and the inability to obtain a replacement. Please note that physicians are not excused from jury service under this ground.
- **You are a health care worker directly involved in the care of a mentally or physically handicapped person, and your continued presence is essential to the regular and personal treatment of that person.**  
To be excused for this reason, you must provide documentation that verifies your occupation.
- **You have already served as a juror in the same county within the last three years.**  
If you have served in the county to which you are being summoned within the last three years and would like to be excused, you must provide a letter of attendance as proof of your previous service or write on the qualification form the approximate date you served and if different, your name at that time. Please note that if you served federal jury duty, jury duty in another state or in another New Jersey county within the last three years, you are not entitled to be excused. The statute requires that your prior service must have occurred in the summoning county, but you should still provide that information on your qualification questionnaire.
- **You are full-time teacher of a grammar/high school during the school year for which a replacement cannot be reasonably obtained.**  
Full-time teachers are not excused from jury duty on that basis alone. If you receive a summons directing you to report when you must teach class and a replacement cannot be obtained, please request a postponement by indicating on the qualification form a date in which you can serve. The Jury Management Office will grant you a new date of service and will make every effort to accommodate your specific request.
- **You believe that you will suffer severe financial hardship.**  
In order to be excused for financial reasons, you must show that serving as a juror will cause a severe financial hardship that will compromise your ability to support yourself or/and your dependents. In order to prove this, you must submit supporting documentation with your completed questionnaire. These documents will be reviewed by the Jury Management Office to verify that serving jury duty will cause a

significant loss in income that will prevent you from supporting yourself and your family. In addition, jurors who are involved in the jury selection process may speak with the trial judge regarding their financial hardships at the time of voir dire based on the anticipated length of the trial. Depending on your individual circumstances, the trial judge may excuse you from serving on a particular trial.

**NOTE:** Police officers and prosecutors are disqualified from serving as grand jurors but they may serve as petit jurors.

## **REPORTING**

### **12. What are the penalties for failing to return my qualification questionnaire or not reporting for service?**

Jurors who fail to respond or appear for jury duty, without a reasonable excuse, may be punished for contempt of court pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 2B: 20-14b* and subject to a fine of up to \$500.00 or imprisonment.

### **13. Can I get my summons date changed?**

The Jury Management Offices mail summonses a minimum of five weeks in advance of the reporting date in order to provide sufficient notice for jurors to make all necessary arrangements. If you have a conflict with the days for which you have been summoned, you may request to be postponed. Requests must come directly from the juror. Employers or others may not call or write on your behalf to request a postponement. You should make your request on your qualification questionnaire that you return within ten days of receipt. If some later occurrence affects your ability to serve on the summons date you should notify the Jury Management Office as soon as possible in order to allow for timely processing.

**Petit Jurors** - Please indicate on your questionnaire dates to which you would like your service to be rescheduled. When deciding on your new reporting date, please keep in mind that jurors are not summoned on State holidays, the week of Thanksgiving, or generally on Fridays in most counties and during the last two weeks of the year.

**Grand Jurors** -The term of grand jury service is generally one day each week for a specified number of weeks. Depending on the nature of the request, service may be rescheduled to a future date.

**State Grand Jury** - You will receive written notification and instructions regarding reporting to Trenton for service as a State grand juror. The instructions will also indicate the procedures for requesting an excuse.

### **14. What is the juror call-off system?**

**NOTE:** Juror Call-off is a notification process used only for Petit Jurors, not Grand or State Grand Jurors, and provides notification to jurors the night before their reporting date on whether they will need to report to the courthouse. It is done in order to provide greater convenience to jurors and also to reduce costs and relies on Jury Managers' daily assessment of juror needs for the following day -- based on the most current information available from trial judges and Judiciary division managers.

The juror call-off system is for Petit jurors only. To determine if you are required to report as summoned, you must call the Jury Management Office or go to [www.njcourts.com/juryreporting/](http://www.njcourts.com/juryreporting/) after 5:00 the evening before you are summoned to report for service. The message will refer to your juror numbers (located on the JUROR badge portion of your summons) and will provide reporting instructions. If you are unable to access the message, you must report as indicated on your summons.

## **COMPENSATION / EMPLOYMENT**

### **15. How are jurors compensated for their service?**

Jurors' daily fee is set by statute at \$5 per day for grand jurors and for petit jurors (*N.J.S.A. 22A:1-1.1*). In addition to that daily fee, the statute requires that petit jurors receive an additional \$35 per day starting on their fourth consecutive day of service and each day thereafter. Where available, parking is provided. Other amenities for jurors are noted on each county's internet juror call-off site, which can be accessed at: [www.njcourts.com/juryreporting/](http://www.njcourts.com/juryreporting/). Information on parking is printed on the juror questionnaire / summons and is also available on line.

### **16. Can I get verification for my employer of the dates that I served?**

The Jury Management Office can provide written verification for you and/or your employer that will show each date that you served as a juror. If you do not receive that document while at the courthouse during your juror service, you may request it later but please note that the request needs to come from you or from your employer on company letterhead. The verification document will be mailed to the juror's address. Please note that you will only get verification for the dates which you actually reported for service.

### **17. How quickly can I expect to receive payment for juror service?**

Juror payrolls are processed each Friday, except holidays. Therefore, a juror may receive more than one check if that juror served in different weeks. Checks are processed centrally in Trenton in order to reduce costs and are generally mailed within a week of the Friday processing.

Please note that juror fees are considered to be reimbursement for expenses incurred while serving, rather than income. You will not receive a Form 1099 relating to your juror fees.

### **18. Is my employer required to pay me for days I served as a juror?**

In New Jersey there is no statutory requirement that a private employer pay your salary during juror service. Whether or not your employer pays you for jury duty depends on your employment situation, including employers' policies, union contracts, and the like. The State of New Jersey will pay you the appropriate juror fee as set forth in the New Jersey statutes. The Jury Management Office is aware that many employers do not pay their employees during jury duty. If service as a juror will create a severe financial hardship, as set forth in *N.J.S.A. 2B:20-10*, you may request to be excused. But please be aware that non-payment by your employer, by itself, is not a valid reason to be excused from service. Each situation will be reviewed individually.

If you are employed full time by the State of New Jersey you will receive your usual compensation while you serve as a juror. However, in accordance with *N.J.S.A. 2B:20-16* you will not receive juror fees. This law applies to persons employed full time by any agency, independent authority, instrumentality of the State of any political subdivision of the State (such as counties or municipalities). Jurors affected by this policy should notify the Jury Management Office when they report for service. If a check is issued to you in error, you will be required to return it to the Jury Management Office.

### **19. Is there protection for my employment while I serve as a juror?**

*New Jersey Statute 2B:20.17* prohibits an employer from penalizing you because you serve as a juror. Penalties for a violation of this statute include the possibility of a criminal charge, as a disorderly persons offense, and a possible civil action for monetary damages and for reinstatement of employment.

**20. Do I remain eligible for unemployment benefits during my service as a petit juror, grand juror, or State grand juror?**

Yes, you remain eligible for unemployment benefits. They are not affected by service as a juror because there is a statute, *N.J.S.A. 43:21-4(c)(5)*, that protects a person's benefits during juror service. That statute states the following:

(5) An unemployed individual, who is otherwise eligible, shall not be deemed unavailable for work or ineligible solely by reason of the individual's attendance before a court in response to a summons for service on a jury.

If an employment interview is scheduled on a day on which you need to report for juror service, notify the Jury Management Office, in advance if possible, and your service will be rescheduled to a later date. Please be aware that verification may be required.

**COMING TO THE COURTHOUSE TO SERVE**

**21. Is there a dress code for jurors reporting?**

Jurors reporting for service should wear clothing appropriate for an appearance in court. Shorts, t-shirts, uniforms or clothing containing statements or offensive symbols are not permitted. All hats must be removed when in a courtroom. Comfortable clothing is also advisable.

**22. Where can I locate driving directions and public transportation information?**

Driving directions to the courthouse are provided on the questionnaire/summons, are available on the Judiciary website or can be searched through internet sites.

[www.njcourts.com](http://www.njcourts.com)

[www.njtransit.com](http://www.njtransit.com)

**23. Will I be screened for weapons when entering the courthouse?**

In order to ensure the safety of those entering NJ courthouses, all persons, including jurors, are screened when entering a NJ Superior Court courthouse. Chemical agents, pepper sprays, or anything resembling a weapon, including scissors, will not be permitted into the Courthouse - for the safety of the public. Please pay attention to additional instructions, on the questionnaire/summons and the internet, about cell phones and other electronic devices. Also, be aware that all metal objects will activate the metal detector and will need to be placed in the trays before passing through the metal detector. If the metal detector is activated as you pass through, you will be screened by an officer using a handheld metal detector. Purses and other carried items, such as briefcases and backpacks will be x-rayed. Any illegal items will be confiscated. The fewer metal items you are carrying, the faster you will pass through the screening process.