

Dallas County Appreciates Your Service as a Juror!

Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook is designed to answer questions jurors typically ask regarding the Dallas County Jury System. Information has been compiled to give jurors a better understanding of their role in the court system, and includes an explanation of the juror selection process, the duties and responsibilities of jurors, and the workings of criminal and civil courts.

Once assigned to a court, jurors will receive instructions from the presiding judge of that court to the law applicable to the case being heard. This handbook is not a substitute for the judge's instructions but rather is provided to supplement the information presented during the daily orientation of jurors.

Importance of Jury Service

Jurors perform a vital role in sustaining the American system of justice. As intended by the United States Constitution, the impartial and random selection of jurors is performed without regard to race, sex, occupation, education, or economic level, and is done to assemble a representative cross-section of the county's population.

The conclusions made by a juror are critically important. The case being heard may be as complex as a contract suit involving millions of dollars, or as simple as one involving a traffic violation. To ensure that the decision of the court is a fair and just one, each juror must take their duty seriously. If the juror fails to serve and serve well, then he or she has failed as a citizen of this county and has injured the rights of the people who go to court seeking justice.

Common Juror Questions

How are individuals chosen for jury service?

A prospective juror list is compiled by the Secretary of State from the current list of registered voters and the Department of Public Safety records, which includes drivers' license and identification cards lists for citizens residing in Dallas County. Every three weeks, the Jury Services Manager, under the supervision of the Local Administrative District Judge, determines the number of jurors needed for the following month. Dallas County's Jury Management System then randomly selects from the prospective juror list the necessary number of individuals to receive a jury summons. The summons are printed with the names and addresses of selected individuals and are mailed through first class postage.

How many jurors are needed each week in Dallas County?

Between 2500 and 3000 individuals are needed each week to form jury panels to be sent to the various courts for selection of trial jurors.

Why are some persons in the Central Jury Room never sent to a courtroom for the jury selection process?

The actual number of trials beginning each day is uncertain. The parties to a suit may unexpectedly reach a settlement or have legitimate grounds to postpone the proceedings. Therefore, it is difficult to predict the number of jury panels which will be needed by Dallas County's 82 courts each day.

Why are prospective jurors asked to complete and submit a questionnaire which contains personal information?

The questionnaire information, including address, place of employment, marital status and religious preference, is used by the attorneys for both sides during the jury

selection process (voir dire). If this information were not available to the attorneys, the selection process would be delayed while the attorneys asked each prospective juror these basic background questions to determine which jurors they prefer and which they wish to challenge.

What is a typical jury size?

There are both 12 and 6-person juries, depending on courts' jurisdiction. District Courts usually call a jury panel between 30 and 60 people to select the eventual 12 jurors needed. County Courts and Justice of the Peace Courts typically request a panel of 12 to 24 persons to select 6 jurors. The jury size is set by statute; the panel size is determined by the number of peremptory challenges allowed and by experience with the selection process.

What happens to the remainder of the jury panel after six or twelve jury members are chosen?

By state law, if a juror is challenged during the selection process (voir dire) he or she is excused by the judge from other service that day.

After a jury has been selected, those jurors who were not chosen or challenged may be reassigned to the general panel of the Central Jury Room. The law allows those jurors to be called for subsequent panels to serve the needs of other courts. Reuse of jurors lessens the total number of jurors who need to be summoned each day.

Will there be a lot of waiting involved?

It is possible that jurors may have to wait in the Central Jury Room or outside a courtroom for an indefinite period of time. This is not "wasted" time because the immediate availability of a jury panel frequently motivates the parties of a trial to negotiate and settle a case without a trial. By the juror's presence and readiness to sit in trial of a case, a juror is actively serving our system of justice.

Why not stagger juror reporting times throughout the day?

Each morning, a brief orientation provides jurors necessary information as to their duties and responsibilities. First, an oath is administered to jurors. Then, jurors view a video presentation. If a shortage of jurors occurs during the morning, standby jurors are instructed to report at 1:00 p.m. At that time, jurors are oriented and sworn in. It is not feasible to repeat the orientation at more frequent intervals throughout the day.

Will jurors be kept overnight in a hotel?

It is extremely unlikely that jurors will be kept together or "sequestered" overnight. Judges understand that keeping a jury overnight imposes a hardship. Therefore, a jury is sequestered only in exceptional circumstances. If it appears a jury will be sequestered, the judge will forewarn the jurors. If a jury is sequestered, the judge and court officers will make every attempt to make their service as comfortable and convenient as possible.

Thank you for your service.

General Information

Must jurors be paid by their employers while serving jury duty.

No, some employers pay employees' regular salary during jury service. It is a violation of state law for an employee to be terminated for serving jury duty or threatened with termination.

What is the rationale for determining the amount of juror pay?

Each petit juror is entitled to receive compensation for each day of jury service. The amount of compensation is determined by the Dallas County Commissioners Court. Total juror payroll amounts to over a million dollars of the County budget each year. An increase in the juror pay rate could possibly necessitate a tax increase.

What if an emergency arises during a juror's service?

If a juror is serving on a trial when the emergency arises, bring the matter to the attention of the judge or court bailiff. If a juror is in the Central Jury Room, notify Jury Services Staff of the emergency.

Why do judges allow cases to be settled after a trial date has been set?

Judges encourage settlements when possible since a settlement represents a voluntary agreement or compromise between parties, thus eliminating the need for a trial. Time and money are saved by all involved – judges, jurors, lawyers, witnesses and the parties. A settlement does not mean a juror's time has been unproductive.

Are business or economic reasons a valid reason to be excused from jury service?

No, business or economic reasons are not valid as an exemption or an excuse from service.

Parking

Jurors receive a discounted parking rate in Dallas County parking garages. On the first day of jury service, parking validation is included on the jury summons. On second and subsequent days of jury service, Dallas County parking tickets are validated in the Jury Services Office from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day.

Buses / Rail

To help ease traffic congestion, Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) offers free round-trip transportation on the first day of jury service only. For schedule information, contact DART at (214) 979-1111 or dart.org.

Hours

Jury Services Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Phones are answered from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Donations

Donations of jury pay go to at-risk youth in the Juvenile Department or in the Foster Care system in Dallas County. If you wish to change your donation, please contact Jury Services staff.

Certificates of Service

When dismissed from jury service, jurors can request a certificate of service. Before 4:30 p.m. on the first day of jury service, request proof of service in the Jury Services Office. After 4:30 p.m. on the first day of service, and on subsequent days of service, request proof from the bailiff of the court in which you served.

Comments

We appreciate your comments regarding your jury service and your impression of the conduct of the courts. Please speak to, or provide comments in writing to:

Shalonda Collins
Jury Services Manager
133 N. Riverfront Blvd. LB-25
Dallas, TX 75207

BEWARE

**OF THE
"MISSED JURY DUTY SCAM!"**

For additional information about the missed Jury Duty scam visit: www.dallascounty.org/departments/juryservices

Frank Crowley Courts Building:
Phone: (469) 256-7818
Fax: (214) 653-5808

George Allen Sr. Courts Building:
Phone: (214) 653-3593
Fax: (214) 653-6900

JURY SERVICE WEBSITE
www.dallascounty.org/departments/juryservices

Dallas County Juror Handbook



Jury Services Department

Frank Crowley Courts Building

133 N. Riverfront Blvd., 2nd Floor
Dallas, TX 75207



George Allen Sr. Courts Building

600 Commerce St., Ste. 150
Dallas, TX 75202

