

Jury Service Frequently Asked Questions:

Q. Who may be called to serve as a juror?

A: County residents who are at least 18 years old, citizens of the United States, can read, write, and understand the English language, and have no criminal convictions of a misdemeanor of the second degree or greater.

Q. How was my name selected for jury duty?

A: The Jury Commission uses a random listing of county residents compiled by the state from voter registration, driver's licensing data, tax rolls, unemployment data, and DHS data. The required number of jurors is randomly selected from a master list and summoned to appear for jury service.

Q. Why have some people never been called for jury duty and I've been called more than once?

A: Selection is a random process. As such, there is always the chance that a person may never be called while another may be called several times.

Q. Will I be automatically exempt from jury duty if I am a police officer, doctor, lawyer, dentist, or schoolteacher?

A. No. Jury service is a civic duty. No one is automatically excused because of his/her occupation. Many police officers, doctors, lawyers, dentists and schoolteachers have served as jurors.

Q. Are there exemptions/excusals for certain circumstances?

A: Upon request to the Jury Commission Secretary, Pennsylvania law does allow exemption or excusal for: people 75 years of age or older if requested; people in active service of the armed forces of the United States or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; people who have served as a juror within the past three years; people who are no longer residents of the county they have been summoned to; people who demonstrate to the court undue hardship or extreme inconvenience; spouses, children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren of victims of criminal homicide (18 Pa.C.S.A. 2501); breastfeeding women; people who have a medical, mental or physical condition which would impair their ability to serve*; people who cannot read, write, or understand the English language; and citizens who have criminal conviction(s) of a misdemeanor of the second degree or greater.

***NOTE:** If you are requesting to be excused due to a medical, mental or physical condition, **you must have a doctor's excuse** that indicates you are unable to serve. We cannot make exceptions. It is not necessary for the doctor to provide a specific reason, simply that you are unable to serve due to a medical condition. The doctor's excuse can be faxed to (814) 772-7780 for Elk County or (814) 486-0464 for Cameron County.

Q. What should I do if being a juror at that time would create a hardship for me?

A: Only those persons for whom jury service would be an extreme hardship may be excused. If you need to be excused from jury service or have your jury service postponed, you must state the reason for your request on the return form. Reasons for excusal are reviewed and evaluated pursuant to court policy. You can expect a prompt response to your request.

Q. Can I volunteer for jury duty?

A. Volunteering is permitted. Contact the Jury Commission Secretary at (814) 776-5327 in Elk County or (814) 486-9327 in Cameron County if you are interested in being summoned for jury service.

Q. How long will I have to serve?

A: If you are not selected as a trial juror, your length of service will be one (1) day.

If you are selected to serve as a trial juror, your jury service will be for the length of that trial. Most trials take between one to two days to complete, however some may take longer. Potential jurors are informed of the trial date(s) at the beginning of the jury selection process for each case.

Q. What time will I arrive and leave?

A: The normal business hours for the court are 8:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Jury selection and jury trials typically begin at 9:00 a.m. When serving as a trial juror, you may be required to report at a different time and you will be instructed to call a phone call-in system that will advise you of the specific time to report and if your service is required. While acting as a trial juror, you may serve later than 4:00 p.m.

Q. Are there any breaks during the day?

There are mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks and a minimum of an hour for lunch. No food or drinks (other than water) are allowed in the courtroom.

Trial jurors are provided with beverages and snacks. During jury deliberation at the conclusion of the trial, the county will provide a simple meal if the jury requests lunch and/or supper.

Q. How is a jury selected?

Once all the prospective jurors have checked in, the clerk will administer an oath to the jurors. A randomly selected group of 30-40 people will be seated in the front of the courtroom. After some preliminary questions from the judge, the attorneys involved in the case will begin asking questions, starting with the district attorney in a criminal case or the plaintiff's attorney in a civil case, followed by the defendant's attorney. The attorneys may ask if anyone is familiar with the case, knows the parties involved in the case, knows any witnesses in the case, etc. After the questioning is finished, the attorneys will eliminate jurors until only 14 are left. These 14 jurors will sit as trial jurors (12 primary and 2 alternate jurors).

Q. How much do I get paid for jury duty?

A: According to Pennsylvania law, jurors are paid \$9.00 per day for the first three days of jury service and \$25.00 per day for every day thereafter. Pennsylvania law also sets the mileage rate at 17 cents per mile, round trip from your home.

Q. Does my employer have to pay me while I am on jury duty?

A: Pennsylvania law does not require an employer to pay an employee for jury service. Check with your employer for its policy. Your employer cannot discharge you for responding to a juror summons, as long as you provide a copy of your summons to your employer immediately upon receipt.

Q. What happens if a person ignores a summons or fails to report for jury duty?

A: Pennsylvania law provides that such conduct is contempt of court punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

Q. Will I be notified if I do not have to report for jury duty?

A: Yes, when cases are settled or postponed, the Court tries to give jurors as much notice as possible. If time permits, court staff will telephone jurors to cancel their jury service.

Cameron County jurors are given a number to call the night before jury selection and jury trials to find out if they need to report.

Elk County jurors selected for a trial are given a number to call the night before the jury trial to find out if they need to report.

Q. What if the weather is bad?

A: Jury selection and jury trials are rarely cancelled because of bad weather. If you have trouble reporting due to weather conditions, you must contact the Jury Commission Secretary at (814) 776-5327 for Elk County or (814) 486-9327 for Cameron County before 9:00 a.m. on the day you are scheduled to report for jury duty.

Q. Where do I park when I report for Jury Service?

A: **For Elk County residents:** Please park in the spaces that surround the Elk County Courthouse. However, avoid parking on Main Street, as those spaces are reserved for 30 minute parking only. Also, avoid parking in the "Reserved" parking lot, as you will be asked to move your vehicle. Please do not park in the lots for banks, churches or retail customers, such as the YMCA. Two handicapped parking spaces are available in the county parking lot on South Broad Street.

For Cameron County residents: Please park in the parking lot or the area around the courthouse or on side streets where permitted. One handicapped parking space is available in the county parking lot.

Q. What if I have an emergency on the day that I am to report?

A: Please call the Jury Commission Secretary at (814) 776-5327 for Elk County or (814) 486-9327 for Cameron County prior to 9:00 a.m. on the day of service.

Q. What should I wear?

A: Please use good judgment and dress conservatively. Wear clothing that is comfortable and not extreme in style. To maintain the dignity of the court, avoid ripped or revealing clothing, tank tops, and clothing or shirts with offensive words, pictures or logos.

Q. Will I have to go through any security measures when I enter the Courthouse?

A: Both the Elk County and Cameron County courthouses have only one public entrance. In Elk County, enter using the door on the South Broad Street side of the courthouse. In Cameron County, enter using the door on the N. Cherry Street side of the courthouse. Everyone entering the courthouse is subject to a security search and will be required to pass through a metal detector. Please do not bring any weapons (guns, knives), extra metallic objects (unnecessary keys, coins,) or sharp objects (scissors, nail clippers, penknives, knitting needles, etc.) when reporting for jury service. Bags, knapsacks, briefcases, and purses may be searched.

The metal detector will not harm pregnant women or individuals who have pacemakers; it will not affect the magnetic strips on credit or debit cards.

To enter the Courtroom, you must go to the 2nd floor of the courthouse. Elevator service is available.

Do not bring cell phones, smart phones, smart watches, other photographic devices or internet-enabled devices, as they are not permitted on the second floor of the Courthouse. Please secure them in your vehicle prior to entering the building.

Q. Is it possible to appear for jury selection and not be selected for a trial?

A: Yes. More people are called than actually serve because of the process of jury selection. Plus, due to last minute changes in the number of cases scheduled, it is not always possible to estimate accurately the number of jurors who will be needed to serve. If you are not selected for a trial, your jury service is concluded.

Q. If I am a trial juror, will I go home at the end of the day?

A: Trial jurors almost always go home at the end of the day. If a jury is sequestered (a term used to describe jurors who are housed during the trial at the expense of the county), the jurors will be advised of this during the selection process. Sequestration rarely occurs.

Q. During a trial, who are the people in the courtroom?

A. The following people will be in the courtroom in addition to the judge, the jury, and the attorneys. They are:

- **Plaintiff** –The plaintiff is the person who filed a civil suit.
- **Defendant** –The defendant in a civil case is the person being sued. In a criminal case, the defendant is the person who has been charged with a crime.
- **Court Reporter** – The court reporter keeps the official record by recording every word spoken during the trial on a special machine or recording device and maintains all evidence admitted during the trial.
- **Tipstaff** – The tipstaff's responsibility is to attend to the jury following instructions from the judge.
- **Deputy Sheriff** – The deputy sheriff provides security in the courtroom.
- **Clerk** – The Clerk is responsible for all documents contained in the official case file and for swearing in the jury and all witnesses.
- **Witnesses** – Each side in a trial will probably have a number of witnesses who have information about the dispute.

Q. What is the sequence of a trial?

A. The sequence of a trial is as follows:

1. Judge's Initial Instructions
2. Opening Statements
 - Plaintiff's attorney (or prosecuting/Commonwealth's attorney for a criminal case)
 - Defendant's attorney (unless postponed until defendant's presentation of evidence)
3. Testimony of Witnesses and Presentation of Evidence
 - Plaintiff's attorney (or prosecuting/Commonwealth's attorney for a criminal case)
 - Direct examination of plaintiff's witnesses by plaintiff's attorney
 - Cross-examination of plaintiff's witnesses by defendant's attorney
 - Redirect examination of plaintiff's witnesses by plaintiff's attorney
 - Defendant's attorney
 - Direct examination of defendant's witnesses by defendant's attorney
 - Cross-examination of defendant's witnesses by plaintiff's attorney
 - Redirect examination of defendant's witnesses by defendant's attorney
4. Selection and Preparation of Jury Instructions (Judge and Attorneys)
5. Closing Arguments
 - Defendant's attorney
 - Plaintiff's attorney (or prosecuting/Commonwealth's attorney)
6. Jury Instructions presented to the Jury
7. Jury Deliberations
8. Verdict of the Jury
9. Concluding remarks by the judge and dismissal of the jury