

SPECIAL JUROR FAQ

Q: Why is the Court summoning jurors during a pandemic?

A: As the State of Pennsylvania goes into the green phase, we need to be looking ahead to the future when we will be easing up, to a degree, on the current restrictions. We also recognize that victims of crime and those accused of crimes have a Constitutional right to have those accusations addressed by a trial by jury. Therefore, we will be resuming criminal jury trials on a limited basis beginning August 18, 2020.

Q: What steps are being taken to ensure health and safety standards?

A: The Court takes public health and safety seriously. Jurors will be spread out to maintain social distancing guidelines. Frequent cleaning and sanitizing protocols are in place. Access to certain common areas and amenities (coffee maker, refrigerators, water coolers) will be restricted.

Q: Are masks being provided to jurors?

A: We ask all jurors to bring their own masks, as they are required before you arrive at the Courthouse. However, if a juror arrives without a mask, one will be provided. If a juror's mask malfunctions in any way (e.g. strap breaks) a replacement will be provided.

Q: Should I bring my own lunch?

A: Jurors are encouraged to bring their own lunch in a portable container. Jurors are also asked to bring their own water bottle. Limited items for purchase will be available.

Q: How many other people will I be grouped with?

A: For jury selection, there will be 20 jurors reporting at one time; jurors will report to Room 207 for check in and then will go directly to their assigned seat in the jury assembly room, room 211. Jurors will be taken to the courtroom three at a time; court officials will be with the juror (Judge, attorneys, defendant, etc.) This will occur in the courtroom, so all will be spread out. For trial, jurors will be at least six feet apart from all other persons at all times. Larger rooms will be utilized during jury deliberation rather than the traditional jury deliberation rooms.

Q: What if I am unable to serve as a juror?

A: Pennsylvania Law allows for exemption from jury duty. If you have any questions regarding exemption from jury duty, please contact the Jury Coordinator's Office, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., by calling (814) 451-6059 or emailing bhudson@eriecountypa.gov. Please include your juror number and name, as well as the date of possible jury duty.

Q: What if I am a "high risk" individual?

A: Jurors who are defined by the Centers for Disease Control as at-risk if they contract the virus will be released from reporting for jury duty, if requested. The requests will be granted over the phone and these prospective jurors will not be required to report; however, the prospective juror will be

rescheduled to another term. The CDC defines at-risk people as anyone over age 65 or people with underlying health conditions. Jurors who are considered high or medium risk for exposure to the COVID-19 virus should contact the Jury Coordinator's office and may be directed by phone not to report. The Jury Coordinator's office should also be made aware if someone has traveled outside of Pennsylvania within the last 14 days or have had direct contact to a person diagnosed with the virus in the last 14 days, or has a high probability of having the virus but that has not been confirmed by a test.

Q: What if I fail (refuse) to appear without explanation?

A: A Judge has many options to address failure to appear including contempt. However, our Judges are certainly aware of the current health situation. Please contact the Jury Coordinator, rather than fail to appear without explanation.

Q: What if I have symptoms of illness?

A: If you are currently experiencing flu like symptoms (fever, cough or shortness of breath), have been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 30 days, been directed to quarantine/self-monitor for COVID-19 by a medical authority or employer, or are a caregiver for/have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 30 days, please DO NOT report for your service; instead, you must contact the Jury Coordinator's office as soon as possible. See 'What if I am Unable to Serve' (above).