

## **GENERAL JURY INFORMATION**

**Your Role as a Trial Juror** --- Trial by jury is one of the most important constitutional rights that we enjoy as citizens of the United States. Unlike many other countries, all persons in the United States are entitled to be judged by a jury of their peers when charged with criminal wrongdoing or when having civil issues that need to be decided in a court of law.

Your presence for jury service is invaluable. Whether or not you are selected to serve as a trial juror during your term of service, you are making an invaluable contribution by your presence, availability and willingness to serve.

When selected to serve as a juror, you become an active participant in the administration of justice. You should view this responsibility as one of the most important duties that you will ever be called upon to serve in your lifetime. It is an honor and responsibility which has been made possible as the result of the sacrifice of millions of Americans who have fought and died to preserve our system of justice.

On behalf of myself and staff, judges, attorneys, litigants and all other court officials of Crawford County, thank you for your willingness to perform this important and essential civic duty.

**Superior Court and Types of Cases** --- Crawford County has only one court in which jury trials are authorized by law, Superior Court. The Superior Court has jurisdiction over all felony (serious) crime cases, and exclusive jurisdiction over cases involving title to land, divorce, child custody, adoption, equity and construction of wills. As a juror, you may be required to serve on civil and/or criminal cases. A civil case involves a disagreement between two or more private individuals, corporations, or entities that have asked the court to resolve the matter in dispute. Examples of civil cases include, but are not limited to, divorce, breach of contract and personal injury. A criminal case is an issue between the State of Georgia and one or more individuals and is based upon the occurrence of an alleged violation of a state statute enacted for the benefit of the public. The court is then asked to punish the offender. Examples of criminal cases are murder, burglary, shoplifting and operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The District Attorney is the prosecuting attorney in Superior Court. In criminal cases, jurors decide guilty or innocence, but are not responsible for imposing punishment, except in a capital punishment (death penalty) trial.

**How you Become a Juror** --- The most commonly asked question in regards to jury service is how am I considered for jury service. If you are over the age of 18, have a Georgia drivers' license/identification card and/or are registered to vote in the State of Georgia, then you are in Crawford County's active jury pool. Names of potential jurors are randomly selected by a computer-based jury selection program for specific selection dates. Names are not drawn or determined by the staff of this office, judges, attorneys or any other court officials. Once you're randomly selected, you will receive a summons from the Clerk's Office commanding your appearance for service. The summons will provide the date and time for your appearance in Superior Court, as well as general instructions on proper attire and items that are prohibited from being brought into the courthouse.

**Deferrals and Excusals** --- Included with your jury summons, you will find a general information letter and a Juror Affidavit Form. The Juror Affidavit Form should only be used if you have a circumstance warranting its use. For example, you can request a permanent exemption from jury service if you are over the age of 70. In order to claim this exemption, you will need to complete the Juror Affidavit Form and return it to our office as soon as possible. If you are seeking an excusal or deferral for any other reason, you will need to submit proper supporting documentation. **Please note, that work of any kind, including self-employment, is not a legal excuse.** The general information letter you receive with your jury summons will provide you with the deadline to submit your Juror Affidavit Form. It is extremely important to note the deadline for submitting Juror Affidavit Forms, as this will be the last date that you can be excused and/or deferred from jury service. No excusals or deferrals will be granted after the deadline date. *If you are granted a deferral by the clerk, you will be re-summoned for service during the next term of court and will not be excused for any reason.*

**Reporting for Jury Service/Proper Attire** --- All persons summoned for jury service must report on the date and time as shown on the summons unless deferred or excused by the clerk of court. Failure to do so may subject you to the contempt powers of the court, which can include a fine, incarceration and/or both. You will need to report to the Crawford County Courthouse, located at 100 Georgia Highway 42 South. The Crawford County Sheriff's Office provides security for the entire courthouse. Upon entering the courthouse, you will be subject to a security check using metal detection devices to ensure that no weapons or other prohibited items are brought into the facility. Pursuant to the Sheriff's rule, cell phones will not be allowed into the courthouse and they cannot be held at the security station. Please leave your cell phones in your vehicles.

It is important to remember that anytime you appear in court you should dress appropriately and in a manner that shows respect for the court. You should not wear any of the following:

- 1.) Hats or other head coverings inside the courtroom (except those worn for religious or medical purposes).
- 2.) Sunglasses
- 3.) T-shirts depicting violence, sexual acts, profanity or illegal substances.
- 4.) Tube or halter tops/plunging necklines/bare midriffs
- 5.) Excessively ripped or torn jeans
- 6.) Miniskirts or shorts
- 7.) Baggy pants that fall below the waist
- 8.) Muscle shirts or any other shirts that would normally be worn as undergarments.

The courtroom is a place of order and structure. You should at all times act in a respectful manner when in the presence of the judge, court staff, attorneys, court officers and other persons attending court.

**Length of Service** --- Due to the nature of the judicial system, it is difficult to determine or provide an exact amount of time that you will have to serve as a juror. In some instances, all of the trials scheduled for a trial week will settle, thereby negating the need for jurors. In those

cases, the clerk will call roll for attendance and inform the jurors that their services will not be needed for the week. In the case that jurors will be needed, your time of service will vary depending on the complexity of the case. On average, most trials can last anywhere from 1-3 days.

**Reimbursement** --- You will be reimbursed \$25.00 for each day that you serve as a juror. This amount is set by the Grand Jury. The reimbursement is for expenses you incur while serving as a juror. Additionally, the clerk's office will provide you with a signed and sealed notice stating the number of days you served and the total amount you received for reimbursement. This notice may be provided to your employer as proof of your service. It is important to note that the clerk's office only provides one original notice of your service as a juror.

**Employee -Employer Information** --- Since jury service is a mandated civic duty, it is very important that employers support employees who are called for jury service. Individuals, businesses and corporations benefit from and are protected by the courts and thus, the ongoing support of the private sector is a necessary component of the jury system. Civil litigation commonly involves business-related disputes (including actions concerning contracts, wrongful termination, product defects, malpractice, intellectual fraud and personal injury).

As an employer, you are required by law to allow an employee time off from work to serve on jury duty. O.C.G.A. § 34-1-3 prohibits discrimination against an employee for his or her attendance at a judicial proceeding in response to a court order or process, which includes jury summons. An employee is entitled to pay while serving as a juror. In 1989, the Attorney General for the State of Georgia interpreted state law pertaining to jury service, stating that an employer must pay an employee's salary when the employee misses work due to jury duty. (**See 1989 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 89-55**).

**Jury Information Line** --- The Clerk's Office utilizes one of our extra phone lines as a Juror Information Line. When you call this number, you will receive a pre-recorded message regarding jury service. The message will only be updated within a day or two preceding your scheduled appearance date. In most cases, it is updated no later than 5 PM on the Friday before your scheduled appearance date. It is highly recommended that you call the number to receive the most up to date information on whether your services as a juror will be required. The Juror Information Line is (478) 836-3508. Please do not leave any messages on this line as this phone is not monitored on a daily basis. If you need to speak with someone within our office regarding jury service or any other related matter, please call our office line at (478) 836-3328.

I hope you find this information helpful and all of us at the Crawford County Clerk's Office greatly appreciates your willingness to serve as a trial juror.