

ONLINE JUROR ORIENTATION

Superior Court of Los Angeles County

Interactive Web Site Gives Jurors a Head Start

Up to 10,000 prospective jurors report for duty each day in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County—enough people to populate a small city. The court, like other trial courts in California, is required by law to provide orientation for all of them. Using the latest Web and video streaming technologies, Los Angeles County has launched the first program to offer fully interactive juror orientation over the Internet, with customized information on parking, amenities, emergency evacuation procedures, and other distinct features for each of the county's 34 courthouses.

The Online Juror Orientation program appeals to mobile professionals, parents, and others who find it worthwhile to cut their time in the jury assembly room by as much as two hours on the first day of jury

service. Jurors can complete orientation at their own convenience wherever there's an Internet connection. They then print out a certificate of completion, which they submit when they report for service. They walk into court ready to go to the jury pool for the first panel.

By reducing the first-day crush of prospective jurors reporting for orientation, the court alleviates crowding in the assembly room and increases the effectiveness of its staff, who have less paperwork to process and fewer people to point to restrooms and restaurants.

The orientation consists of three videos, each incorporating an interactive quiz. When a juror enters a wrong answer, the correct answer automatically pops up. Two of the videos are specific to the Los Angeles court system and were created by the court's staff. The third is a state-mandated *Ideals Made Real* orientation video that describes the judicial process and the juror's role in it. The court did all of the scripting, filming, and programming internally, using a rented teleprompter. No services were bought.

About 800 jurors a month currently are participating in the year-old program—enough to have made a noticeable difference, says Gloria M. Gomez, the director of jury services for the court. The court has begun an aggressive effort to promote online orientation. A brochure about the program is being mailed with the jury summons, and information on the program is incorporated into the voice response that jurors reach when calling in, as they must, after receiving their summonses.

The court now is working on a brief online refresher orientation for jurors who repeat service within a short time span. Also, a system is being designed to allow



Jury assembly room in Los Angeles County.

jurors who have been through online orientation to report directly to a designated courtroom for a case instead of checking in at the assembly room, further reducing their first-day time commitment.

At the end of the orientation, jurors are invited to participate in a short survey. Their comments are being used to refine the program. The size of the video window will be increased, for example, and a long segment will be chopped into three short ones. But the content is “exactly what needs to be provided to set up their expectations—how the term of service works, what they’ll be paid, where to find the parking directions on the summons, what is going to happen to them, when they can use phones, how to dress, how to get through security,” Ms. Gomez says. Except for legislative changes, which will be incorporated quickly, the content won’t change significantly.

“This is what some jurors had to say about online juror orientation:

“Intelligent, informative presentation. Spoke to me and not at me . . . Looking forward to jury service.”

“This orientation provides the potential juror with a sense of positive anticipation to serve, as opposed to the usual sense of reluctant obligation.”

“Very well done and much better than reporting at 8 a.m.”

“Anything that allows me to not have to fight downtown L.A. commuter traffic is worth its weight in gold. Serving on jury is not a problem for me, but driving into downtown L.A. is a nightmare.”

“It was a nice way to complete required orientation at home, making it easier to take care of my children on my first day of service.”

Contact:
Gloria M. Gomez, Director of Juror Services
(213) 974-5814 | ggomez@lasuperiorcourt.org



TO REPLICATE THIS PROGRAM:

Contact Ms. Gomez for scripts and other materials for you to adapt. She will put you in touch with staff who worked on the scripts and judges who participated in the videos.

The online orientation is a Web application developed with Microsoft's .Net technology. Streaming videos using Adobe's Flash technology are coupled with interactive questions to help ensure that jurors are properly equipped for service.