

CONNECTING WITH JURORS

recognized this as a potential avenue to share information about the court and seized on the opportunity to create a dialogue with jurors. The court used its CwC grant to contract with the Criminal Justice Research Division of the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). Together, they held four focus groups with jurors to find out whether they were interested in using this time to learn about the courts, and if so, what information would be most useful to them and how the court should deliver it. A total of 75 jurors participated in these discussions. Each focus group lasted about one hour and included brief introductions by a judge or court staff person.

San Diego found that jurors welcomed the opportunity to use their time at the courthouse to learn more about how the court works and what services it offers. Some preferred in-person interactions, such as live question-and-answer sessions, presentations, and courthouse tours. Others urged the court to increase its use of technology, such as making improvements to the court's Web site, showing court-related videos, and providing computer kiosks that allow jurors to select from a menu to view presentations or print information.

San Diego also held a forum with local bar associations, organizations assisting self-represented litigants, citizens' groups, and the media to explore how it could improve knowledge of and access to the court.

SANDAG prepared a report, which explains how the forums were conducted, sets forth conclusions, and suggests actions for follow-up. San Diego is using this report to inform its strategic and operational plans.

The same scenario plays out in courthouses throughout the state—people report for jury duty and inevitably spend time waiting to be called. The Superior Court of San Diego County

“The focus groups facilitated by SANDAG have provided very valuable information and perspectives to the court about our services and areas where we can improve our current operations or consider new initiatives to better serve our community.”

—Presiding Judge
Janis Sammartino