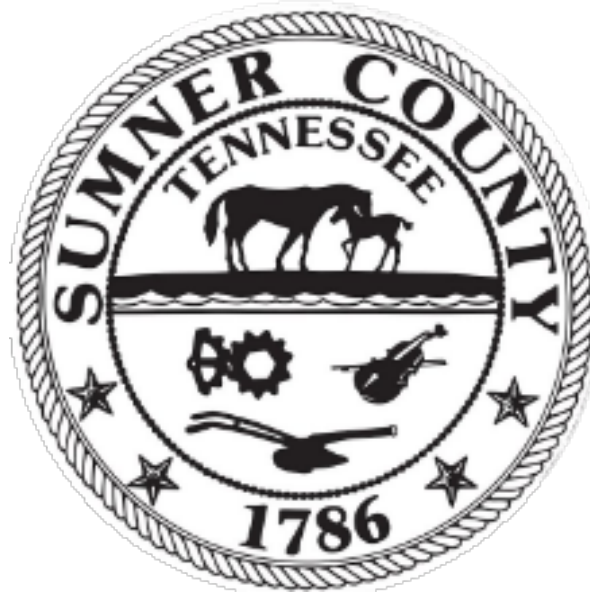


# **JURY SERVICE HANDBOOK**



**Sumner County Circuit Court  
Kathryn Strong, Clerk**

**Website: [sumnercourts.com](http://sumnercourts.com)  
Email: [sumnerjury@tncourts.gov](mailto:sumnerjury@tncourts.gov)**

# **Welcome to Jury Service in the Sumner County Circuit Court**

Thank you for your service to Sumner County and the Circuit Court. This handbook provides you with some important information regarding your jury service. Please keep this as a reference.

Jury service is not only a duty of citizenship, it is a privilege. In speaking with jurors over the years, we have found that most people find their jury service to be interesting and worthwhile. We believe that you will feel this way about your jury service as well.

If you have any questions or concerns throughout your month of service, please do not hesitate to reach out to us via email or phone.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Jury Coordinator: (615) 934-5120

Email: [sumnerjury@tncourts.gov](mailto:sumnerjury@tncourts.gov)

Fax: (615) 451-6027

## **Building Addresses:**

Criminal Justice Center (Criminal Trials)  
117 W. Smith Street  
Gallatin, TN 37066

Courthouse (Civil Trials)  
100 Public Square  
Gallatin, TN 37066

## **PARKING**

Parking is available at City Hall, across the street from the Criminal Justice Center, and behind the Criminal Justice Center.

## **MEALS**

Sumner County provides lunch for criminal cases involving felony charges. All other meals are the responsibility of the jurors. Most of the time, you will be allowed to leave

the courthouse during the lunch break. You are also welcome to bring your own food and/or drinks into the jury room. Some snacks and drinks are provided.

## **ATTIRE FOR COURT**

You should wear comfortable, neat clothing. It is not required that you wear “Sunday dress” attire, but business casual is recommended. It is also a good idea to bring a sweater or light jacket in case you find the courtrooms to be cold. **DO NOT WEAR** shorts or tank tops, sweat suits, t-shirts or jogging suits that is not in keeping with the dignity of the court.

## **LAWS GOVERNING JURY SERVICE**

Any person summoned for jury service in Sumner County Circuit Court is required to report as directed unless excused by the Court. The grounds for an excusal are limited as jury service is an acknowledged duty of citizenship, and our form of government requires individuals to serve as jurors when called. A person summoned for jury service who fails to appear as directed can be ordered by the Court to appear and show cause for failure to comply with the summons. If a person fails to appear, they could be held in contempt of court and fined up to \$500.

By statute, an employer may not discharge, threaten to discharge, intimidate, or coerce any permanent employee because of the employee’s jury service, or the attendance or scheduled attendance in connection with jury service. Employers could be found guilty of a Class A misdemeanor should this occur. If you believe your employer has engaged in such prohibited conduct, you should inform the judge or the clerk immediately.

## **REQUESTING EXCUSE**

If you have a reason which you feel qualifies you for excusal from jury service, you must complete and submit a Request for Undue Hardship form. This form is located on [sumercourts.com](http://sumercourts.com) or you may call the Jury Coordinator at (615) 934-5120 and request a form to be emailed to you. Please state your request thoroughly. If your request is denied, you are required to report.

When you call the Juror Information Line and your number is asked to report, that means we are expecting you to be here. **PLEASE DON’T WAIT** until you get your notification to report to let us know you are not available. In the event of a last-minute emergency, call the Jury Coordinator at (615) 934-5120.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

A person is only eligible for jury service if he or she is at least 18 years of age, is a citizen of the United States, has been a resident of Sumner County for at least 12 months, has not served as a juror during the previous 12 months, and has not been convicted of perjury, a felony, or any infamous offense. There is no maximum age

beyond which a person is excused from jury duty. However, anyone over the age of 75 that also has a mental or physical condition that would hinder their jury service, is eligible to submit an Age and Disability form in order to be excused from service. That form is available online at [sumnercourts.com](http://sumnercourts.com). The form was also mailed to you with your original jury summons. All other persons with a physical or mental condition that feel they are not able to serve on jury duty must submit documentation to the Jury Coordinator along with the proper form to apply for an excusal from jury duty.

## **BAD WEATHER**

If Sumner County courts close due to bad weather on the first day you are to report for jury duty, you are not required to appear on that day. The Juror Information Line will be updated as well as text messages sent to jurors that have signed up for text message notifications regarding court closings.

## **JURY INFORMATION LINE**

Once you have signed up for jury duty, jurors are **REQUIRED** to call the Jury Information Line, (615) 451-6053, after 4:30 pm on the last business day before the specified reporting date. Remember, if you do not call the jury information line and report unnecessarily as a result, you will not be paid for your attendance that day; it will not count as one of your days of attendance; and we cannot verify to your attendance to your employer.

The recorded message will inform you whether there has been any change in your reporting date or time. The message will not refer to you by name, but by juror number.

The Jury Information Line is a **RECORDED MESSAGE ONLY**. If you need to speak with the Jury Coordinator, please call (615) 934-5120 Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.

## **TEXT MESSAGE NOTIFICATIONS**

If you prefer to be notified when you are required to appear for jury duty instead of calling the Jury Information Line, then you must send a text message containing the words **SUMNERJURY** to the number 43506. Once you sign up for text message notifications, you will receive a text on the afternoon before you have to report informing you of which juror numbers need to report, the time to report and the location.

Please note that all jurors that have signed up for text messages receive the jury reporting messages. The messages are not sent only to the jurors that must report. If you have been already been excused for that day by the jury coordinator, then we do not expect you to appear.

## **PAYMENT FOR JURY SERVICE**

Attendance Fee: \$11.00 per day

You will be paid for each day you attend when your juror number is asked to report, whether you are selected to serve on a jury or not. The court cannot pay you if you fail to call the Juror Information Line or sign up for text notifications and report when you are supposed to report. Juror service payment is processed at the end of your month service term and mailed to your home address. If you have questions regarding your juror payment, please contact the Jury Coordinator.

If you are employed, you are entitled by law to receive your regular pay from your employer, minus the \$11.00 attendance pay. If your employer requires you to not accept payment, please consider donating your payment to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund. If you would like more information about this provision, please request a donation form from the Jury Coordinator when you report for service. If you need supporting documentation showing that you were in attendance for jury service on the day you report, then please ask the Jury Coordinator or Clerk for said documentation before leaving the courthouse.

## **SECURITY**

It is a security requirement that every person entering the Criminal Justice Center or Courthouse go through a metal detector. Further, cell phones and bags are not allowed inside the courthouse. You will need to leave those items at home or in your car. Please make certain to have a photo identification with you.

## **USE OF ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY**

It is essential that jurors' decisions be based solely on the information received in the courtroom.

Please remember these rules:

Do not talk to anyone or let anyone talk to you about the case. This includes your family and friends. You must not discuss any aspect of the case with anyone until the trial is concluded. Also, do not discuss the case with other jurors until your deliberations begin.

Do not receive or send electronic communications about the case. This includes texting, emailing, blogging, posting information on social network websites, or using any other electronic communication to discuss, or even mention, the case.

Avoid outside information from the internet or other sources. This means that during the trial, you must not conduct any independent research about the case, the matters in the case, and the individuals or corporations involved in the case. Do not try to find out

information from any source outside the confines of the courtroom. This includes consulting dictionaries or reference materials, searching the internet, websites, blogs, or using any other electronic tools to obtain information about the case. You must also avoid news reports – broadcast, print or internet relating to the case or issues in the case.

## **JUROR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

1. *Where did you get my name?* The Sumner County Circuit Court obtains the names of its jurors from the Tennessee Department of Safety (Tennessee issued State Identification Cards and Driver's License).
2. *How long is my term of service?* Approximately 1 month of service for petit (trial) jurors and approximately 3 months for grand jurors.
3. *When I have completed my service as a juror, will I be called to serve again?* The court's pool of juror names is replenished every 2 years so you should not be called again for at least 2 years.
4. *If I am not selected to serve on a trial, how do I know what to do next?* You will be told before you leave the courthouse when to report back or that you will be notified that day by 4:30 pm with instructions for the following day.
5. *How much are jurors paid?* Attendance pay is \$11.00 per day.
6. *How do I get my check?* Checks are mailed to your home address.
7. *Does my employer have to pay me or at least make up the difference when I serve on a jury?* T.C.A. 22-4-106(b) provides "...the employee shall be entitled to such employee's usual compensation received from such employment; however, the employer has the discretion to deduct the amount of the fee or compensation the employee receives for serving as a juror. Moreover, no employer shall be required to compensate an employee for more time than was actually spent serving and traveling to and from jury duty. If an employer employs less than five people on a regular basis, or if the juror has been employed by an employer on a temporary basis for less than six months, the employer is not required to compensate the juror during the period of jury service pursuant to this section".
8. *What happens if my employer wrongly reduces my pay, requires me to change my schedule or otherwise attempts to interfere with my jury service?* By statute, an employer may not discharge, threaten to discharge, intimidate, or coerce any permanent employee because of the employee's jury service, or the attendance or scheduled attendance in connection with jury service. If you believe your employer has engaged in such prohibited conduct, you should inform the judge or the clerk immediately.
9. *What types of cases will jurors decide in circuit court?* Criminal trials and civil trials will be heard. Criminal trials involve a party or parties who are alleged to have violated state law and who have been indicted by a grand jury. Civil trials involve two or parties that have a dispute between each other or an entity.
10. *How many days do trials last?* Jury trial can last anywhere from less than one day to 2 weeks. The majority of trials last 1 – 3 days. In the event of a lengthy trial, the court will consider special hardship requests for excuse.

11. *Can I get out of serving?* To be excused from service, you must complete and submit the Request for Undue Hardship form. If your request is denied, you are required to report.
12. *Will I ever be required to serve late in the evening or stay overnight?* Sometimes trials run past 5:00 pm in order to complete the testimony of a witness or for the jury to complete deliberations. If that happens, you will have time to make arrangements and advise your family.