

**OFFICE OF THE JURY COMMISSIONER
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**MASSACHUSETTS JURY DUTY – YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE
TRANSCRIPT**

SEASON 01 – EPISODE 06

OFFICE OF JURY COMMISSIONER

"Jury Duty: You Make A Difference"

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Begin Transcript.

Title Card: MASSACHUSETTS JURY DUTY, YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

With Operations Manager Jennifer Shaw, By the Massachusetts Judicial Branch

Audio Video Recording produced by the Office of the Jury Commissioner in association with the Boston Neighborhood Network

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Michael Ryan, Host

MICHAEL RYAN, BNN LIVE HOST: Hi. My name is Mike Ryan. The name of the show is Jury Duty: You Make a Difference on BNN, the show that hopefully will answer all your questions about the one day, one trial jury system.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Michael Ryan, Host

Our guest today is Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager for the Office of Jury Commissioner.

Welcome, Jen.

MS. SHAW: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

HOST RYAN: Thanks for being on the show.

Jen is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts in Boston with a degree in Criminal Justice, and before coming to the Jury Commission, she worked for Boston Financial Data Services.

She was appointed operations manager in 2006.

So right off the bat, are you the person who sends out those jury notices?

MS. SHAW: I am. I don't go around and individually put them in people's mailboxes

HOST RYAN: No, you don't do that.

MS. SHAW: No.

HOST RYAN: Okay. I wasn't sure.

MS. SHAW: We don't pick and choose. It's a random, random summons, random, people are randomly assigned to different locations at different counties at different times. I do, I create the file that gets sent to our printing vendor and mailed out.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager, Office of the Jury Commissioner

As the operations manager, I'm also in charge of the mailroom which is incoming and outgoing mail. All of our mail is opened.

HOST RYAN: You must, you must get a lot.

MS. SHAW: We, no, actually,

HOST RYAN: No?

MS. SHAW: Since we went live with the website, our, our incoming mail is definitely, definitely decreasing.

I'm also in charge of the call center which is our 1-800 number that jurors can call in and ask any questions they may have.

HOST RYAN: What's that number again?

MS. SHAW: It is 1-800-843-5879, so 1-800-THE-JURY is our, is our phone number.

HOST RYAN: Do you always get a warm body when you speak to the call center?

Title Card: JURY DUTY, For More Information Call 1-800-THE-JURY, 1-800-843-5879

MS. SHAW: You do. You absolutely do. When our office is open, we like to have our attendants available at all times so you can actually call in and talk to a live person. There isn't a whole bunch of menu options that you have to press in in order to get a live person.

Our calls are typically answered within about two minutes. There's a two minute wait time which we, we definitely pride ourselves in.

And we can, we can answer anywhere from up to 1,000 calls per day. So there, from Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 4:30 our operators are standing by waiting to,

HOST RYAN: Waiting for a jury question.

MS. SHAW: Waiting to take your calls.

You know, there's some people that are more comfortable talking to a, to a live person or may not have access to a computer to be able to go in and, and respond to their summons, or some of them may have some questions of a personal nature, if they're, they're getting summonsed for jury duty for the first time and are concerned about having to go to a courthouse, they've never been, they don't know where they're going.

So there's a lot of different, different questions that come up that people, people need answers for.

HOST RYAN: What if, what if somebody has a language issue? Are there any bilingual operators?

MS. SHAW: Yes. We are very fortunate to have three Spanish speakers in the office. We have a Haitian Creole speaker and another woman, I believe she speaks Albanian. So we, we definitely have a lot of, a lot of people that can, can answer if someone doesn't speak English as their, as their first language.

HOST RYAN: When I get one of these white and blue envelopes that say jury duty, your civic obligation, how do I respond to that?

MS. SHAW: There's different ways that you can respond. The easiest and most effective way is to go onto our website which is MAJury.gov, and click on the link that says respond to your summons.

Title Card, JURY DUTY, Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager, Office of the Jury Commissioner

On that, you can go in online. You can provide us with an email address, you can, which you would get email notifications in the future from our office.

You can request a postponement. There's a calendar feature on our website that you can actually go in and select the exact date that would work better for you. Jurors are allowed to postpone out a full year, so that's really been, been a great feature that jurors have liked a lot because, you know, if they are, have, would have a better time serving on a Monday as opposed to a Friday, they can go in and, and pick their new date.

They can request a disqualification if they need to be disqualified. There's ten reasons that jurors can be disqualified for.

And there's, there's an opportunity for them to request a hardship transfer if they have a valid hardship reason, whether they have a medical condition or another reason that they could, they could request to transfer their location that they're currently assigned to.

There's also a place on our website that a juror can go in and provide feedback if, you know, if they have a hard time or any type of feedback that they want to give us, I actually go in and, and review all of the feedback that the jurors send.

And if they have a particular question or something that needs a response to, they can leave us an email address on the site, and we'll, we'll get back to them.

If they're not computer savvy, and they just want to, the summons itself has a perforated card that they can tear off and just fill out whether they can serve on that day, whether they want a postponement, whether they need to be disqualified, and just throw it in the mail back to our office, and we'll go ahead,

HOST RYAN: It's prepaid?

MS. SHAW: It is prepaid. Yup.

Or they can call us at 1-800-843-5879 and talk to a live person.

Or they can email us also if they want to respond to us via email, there's, our email address is on all of our forms.

HOST RYAN: Now, you mentioned about postponement. Do I have to give a reason to postpone my service?

MS. SHAW: You do not. No. You are allowed to postpone your service up to one full year time period. And again, another, the great feature like I said is to be able to go online and, and select your own date that's, that's convenient for you.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, For More Information Call 1-800-THE-JURY, 1-800-843-5879

You know, we realize people, people have lives, people have children, people are taking care of sick family members, people are self-employed, teachers, doctors, lawyers, you know, someone that may need to reschedule to another particular time.

HOST RYAN: Is there a lead time when you send out these summonses?

MS. SHAW: I do. I mail out summonses twelve weeks in advance to give people enough notice to let them know that hey, you, you know, you've been selected for jury duty three months from now, and that way, they can, they can go in and either confirm if that date's good for them, or they can select a, a new date.

HOST RYAN: Do they respond, do jurors receive a last minute reminder notice about their jurors service?

MS. SHAW: They do.

HOST RYAN: In case they forget?

MS. SHAW: Yes. Absolutely. If they don't respond to their first summons, we mail them out a second summons, and then as their date gets closer, about ten days before they're scheduled, we'll send them a reminder notice which has all of the pertinent information that they need. It gives them directions to the courthouse.

It gives them the phone number that they need to call the night before to see if they're actually going to come in because there's a possibility that they may be cancelled.

It gives them parking information, the time they need to be there, where they need to report, and basically everything that they need for, for their day.

HOST RYAN: Is there anything else on the reminder notice?

MS. SHAW: There is a confidential juror questionnaire on the back of the reminder notice that needs to be filled out by every juror. It just asks specific questions, whether you have any experience with the law, what your, your occupation is, if you have any children.

It just gives the attorneys and the Judges a better view of, of what your, your life is and, and how a particular case may, may affect you.

HOST RYAN: So they should bring the, the completed questionnaire with them when they report for service?

MS. SHAW: Yes.

HOST RYAN: Now, if I go to jury duty say in downtown Boston, what's the best way of transportation?

MS. SHAW: Absolutely public transportation. If you are summonsed to go to Suffolk Superior Court or the Edward Brooke Courthouse, there is no, the parking is very expensive. I think it's maybe 30 to 40 dollars a day to pay to park. There's no, there's no lot around there that, you know, we always tell jurors absolutely public transportation is the, is the way to go.

Or if they can get a ride and get dropped off by a family member or something, it's definitely, definitely too expensive to pay to park.

HOST RYAN: What should I wear for jury duty?

MS. SHAW: Jury duty is a, a very serious matter, and you should dress, I mean obviously you don't need to wear a, a shirt and, a suit and tie,

HOST RYAN: Okay.

MS. SHAW: But business casual. We tell people business casual. No hats, no flip flops, no shorts, no tank tops, you know, no t-shirts with writing on them or ripped jeans.

Definitely, you know, you're going to decide someone's fate that's been charged with a crime. You should take it seriously and, and dress, dress professionally.

HOST RYAN: What can I bring as a juror to, if I have to wait in the Court?

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager, Office of the Jury Commissioner

MS. SHAW: I would absolutely suggest that every juror that, that needs to serve bring something to do with them, whether it's work, whether it's a book. Some Court locations now will also allow jurors to bring in laptops. So if you have a laptop and you want to bring, you know, your laptop with you, definitely call us ahead of time and, and we can let you know whether your particular Court location allows laptops.

You know, if you have a Kindle, if you want to bring a Kindle and read a book as opposed to a magazine.

Some of the Courts, we do ask them to, you know, have staff people bring in old magazines so that there's at least something for the jurors to read while, while they're there, but it's

definitely a good idea to bring, bring something, something with you to do, puzzle, book, magazine.

You know, there's potential that you can sit for a little while and, and, and wait, and you definitely don't want to just be sitting there staring blankly.

HOST RYAN: When I come to, come to jury duty, what should I expect? Is there some sort of a routine?

MS. SHAW: There is. Every courthouse is different, but on the, again, you'll get the reminder notice which will tell you where to park, where to go, what time to be there. You'll go what's called the jury pool room. That is specified on the reminder notice, a particular location.

You'll be greeted by a Court Officer there. The Court Officer will welcome you, check you in, give your attendance, and give you a brief verbal orientation about, you know, what your day's going to be like, what you can expect, where the bathrooms are, most importantly what time is lunch, and just what, you know, the biggest question for jurors and the question that we hear over and over again is how long am I going to be there.

We can't, we don't know that ahead of time. We don't know what's on for the trials for that day. You know, you could be, it just, it all depends.

So, and then after the jurors are greeted and given attendance, they watch a juror video that goes into a little bit more in depth about a trial and what, you know, evidence is and, and what the jurors will be, will be seeing, whether it's see a civil or a criminal trial that they may be sitting, sitting on.

And then a Judge will come down and greet them.

And then they wait till they get the call from the courtroom that a case, a trial's ready to go.

HOST RYAN: So that's why they should bring something to amuse themselves.

MS. SHAW: Yes.

HOST RYAN: While they're waiting for the call from the, from the courtroom.

MS. SHAW: Yes. Most definitely. And I see more and more jurors bringing in their laptops and, and are busy working.

If they have, unfortunately, there's no Wi-Fi within the Courts, but you know, if jurors have access to that and can bring their laptop with them, then it, it's a great thing. They don't waste, waste any time.

HOST RYAN: As the person who sends out the jury summonses, where do you find the names for potential jurors?

MS. SHAW: All 351 cities and towns have to submit a list to our office. We get our names from the town census listings. And each year, a master juror list is created with all of the available names, and it's just random. Jurors are randomly summonsed.

Each year, a new list is created, and each year, new jurors are attached to that list and, and sent summonses, jurors that, that are eligible to be summonsed.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Michael Ryan, Host

HOST RYAN: If I don't sign up to vote, I can still get jury duty, right?

MS. SHAW: Absolutely. Yes. A lot of people think, oh, I'm not going to register to vote so I don't get jury duty, jury duty notice in the mail. But no, we get our names from the, the town census listing, which also allows us to have the most up to date names.

And so our list is really good. We have, you know, a low, a low undeliverable rate of summonses which also is, is, is a great thing. You know, you're not sending a summons to someone who no longer lives there so.

HOST RYAN: What's the minimum age for jury duty?

MS. SHAW: Minimum age is 18, and jurors can receive a summons while they're still 17, but as long as they turn 18 by the time of their summons, then they're, they're eligible to serve.

So there's, you know, you may be in high school still if you, if you started late and you're an 18 year old high school student, that you are, you are eligible to, to serve as a, as a juror.

HOST RYAN: College students as well?

MS. SHAW: College students, yes. Yup. Absolutely. And out of state college students are also, also eligible to serve because they're considered inhabitants of the state of Massachusetts.

They're here living on campus for six months out of the year, so they are eligible to serve and are frequently, frequently called to serve as jurors.

The good thing that, you know, we work with people. We understand your, I'm a high school student. We don't want to take you from your classes.

I'm a college student. I'm paying a lot of money to go,

HOST RYAN: Sure.

MS. SHAW: To a particular college. We understand that, and that, jurors are allowed to use that, that postponement time to a time maybe during the summer or a time where their, their class schedule isn't as heavy.

We work with all of the, you know, colleges and provide them with information and let them know that teachers should be aware that their students are required to serve.

HOST RYAN: What about students from Massachusetts that go out of state to study? Are they still eligible for jury duty?

MS. SHAW: They are. Yes. They're summonsed here. As long as they're here 50 percent of the year, they are, they are eligible. They'll come back.

So we reschedule them to a time when the, they'll be back, maybe during, over the summer or Christmas break or, or something of that sort.

HOST RYAN: If I'm a resident of Suffolk County, and I go to college still somewhere else in Massachusetts, could I get called from where I go to school?

MS. SHAW: You could, yes.

HOST RYAN: Two summonses?

MS. SHAW: Yes. Yes. But you only need to serve on one.

HOST RYAN: Okay. That's good, right?

MS. SHAW: Yes. No, we can't have you serve more than once, but you do need to be, you do need to serve in the, in the county that you're called in.

So if you're a student in Boston, and you're called to serve in Suffolk County, then you are, you are eligible to serve there because again, you are an inhabitant of, of Suffolk County for six months out of the year.

HOST RYAN: Now, what about people with disabilities who want to come to do jury duty? Are you able to accommodate them?

MS. SHAW: Absolutely. As long as, you know, it's a, in a reasonable accommodation.

Our office has a fabulous ADA coordinators that, that take incoming calls and, and, you know, anyone who may have an ADA issue or needs a little bit more assistance should absolutely call our office at 1-800-843-5879 and let, you know, the call center representative know that they have an issue, whether it's they need, you know, they're diabetic and they need their needles to be placed in, they need to refrigerated or there's certain times that they need to eat, or if they need, they want to know where the handicap

parking is, how far our courthouse is from the parking lot, you know, all these questions that, that may affect the juror's ability to serve.

And if it's, if it's too much for them, they're absolutely welcome to get a letter from their doctor if they want to asking that they be excused if it's, if it's too much of a, of a medical issue for them.

HOST RYAN: And most of our courthouses now are handicap accessible?

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager, Office of the Jury Commissioner

MS. SHAW: Yes. Yup. And every courthouse also has an ADA coordinator, so if they get to the courthouse, and there's an issue, they can ask to speak to the ADA coordinator within the, the, their courthouse location as well.

HOST RYAN: Is there an age limit to serving as a juror?

MS. SHAW: There is no age limit. You are, you are disqualified if you choose to be after you turn 70, and we have a lot of people that are over 70 that still want to serve.

I see a lot of people over 70 that go on our website to respond. You know, they're, you know, they're computer savvy. They, 70 is the new, the new 40, so people want to be able to still serve, and, and they do.

HOST RYAN: So you welcome their, their experience, their wisdom?

MS. SHAW: Absolutely. Yup. Yup. And they take it seriously and are, are willing and able to serve, so it works out great for us.

But if they, you know, if they have a medical condition or if they feel that their age would limit them in some way, they can request to be disqualified.

HOST RYAN: Now, if I come to jury duty, do I get paid?

MS. SHAW: You, your employer is required to pay you for the first three days. If you are not employed, you can request to be reimbursed for your mileage and your travel.

After the fourth day, the state does pay you 50 dollars per day. But as an employed person, your, your employer is required to pay your first three days of service.

Most employers pay from the fourth day on as well. There are some that don't. It just, it depends. You have to check with your, your employer ahead of time and, and find out what their, what their process is for jury duty.

HOST RYAN: What if I'm self-employed?

MS. SHAW: If you're self-employed, you'll still get paid for the fourth day on.

For the first three days, again, you would need to fill out a, a reimbursement form for your mileage or your travel or if it's truly a, a hardship for you for those three days, you can request to go before the Judge at, at what's called a, a Judas Hearing, and they can issue the, issue, also issue you the 50 dollars per day.

HOST RYAN: What about unemployed jurors?

MS. SHAW: Unemployed jurors,

HOST RYAN: Same thing?

MS. SHAW: Same thing. Yup.

HOST RYAN: What about the people who work in, in the jury pools? Are they trained to work with jurors?

MS. SHAW: Yes. We do yearly training probably twice a year for the, the jury pool officers just to give them, you know, little handholding on how to, how to greet jurors, how to treat jurors, how their day is going to, the juror, the system that they need to print off their paperwork.

And, yes, so they're absolutely trained.

HOST RYAN: Now, when I'm finished with my juror service, do I have to do jury duty again?

MS. SHAW: You are excused for the next three years. You do not need to serve again.

We mail you out a service certificate in the mail approximately about ten days after your service.

There's two copies on that service certificate. The bottom portion of that certificate should go to your employer if you have one. The top one you should keep for your records just in case you move or you receive another summons in the mail because you're at, you're at a different address. That's your proof that you already served, and you don't need to serve for that three year time period.

HOST RYAN: And there are no exemptions from jury service?

MS. SHAW: There are not. There are, you know, Police Officers, lawyers, Judges that serve and have sat on trials. Our Jury Commissioner herself, Pamela Wood, she has, she has been a juror.

There are no exemptions, no.

HOST RYAN: Have you served yourself?

MS. SHAW: I have not. I have not. I've been called, but.

HOST RYAN: You haven't been randomly selected yet?

MS. SHAW: I have, I have been randomly selected, but I was cancelled.

HOST RYAN: And,

MS. SHAW: I did not have to go in, so,

HOST RYAN: And if someone, you know, we had such a wonderful winter, those people who were cancelled because of winter weather, what's their status?

MS. SHAW: They are not eligible to be called against next, this year. They are eligible to be called again next year.

So you only get the three year, the three year time period if you actually go in and, and serve. So.

HOST RYAN: So would you say your main purpose is, job number one is customer service?

MS. SHAW: Most definitely. People are nervous when they get their juror summons in the mail. They have never been to a courthouse before. They don't know the system. They don't know what to expect.

Our office is there to make things easier for them, whether it's going in on our website and just selecting a new date or requesting to be disqualified, whether it's calling our office, whether it's emailing us, you know, we're in, we're in technology times, and people want that instant gratification and instant communication, and hopefully we can keep up with that, you know, with the, with the website.

We definitely have, over the past ten years, we've, we've seen huge changes. People, you know, we're up to about 50 percent of people go online to respond to their summons which is huge. It's a savings for us. It's a, it, you know, it's convenience for them.

We have an email account. If jurors have specific questions, they can email us. And we definitely, you know, we take surveys of jurors. We randomly select people and mail them out a survey just to see how we're doing, if our forms are, you know, are, are understandable and, and we've actually done one on one focus groups with jurors as well to make sure that their experience was good.

We, we listen to their comments. We listen to their compliments or their complaints if they have any issues, and we, we, we always, we always respond to their, their feedback. And it, it's good to make sure that we're doing a good job on our, on our end as well.

HOST RYAN: So people when they get called for jury duty should expect not only good service but hopefully a positive experience?

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Jennifer Shaw, Operations Manager, Office of the Jury Commissioner

MS. SHAW: Hopefully, yes, and if they don't, they should absolutely get in touch with us, and let us know.

There's also a survey on our website at MAJury.gov that jurors can go in and, and fill out and provide us with any feedback that they may have.

They're welcome to write in to a letter, write, mail a letter to our office, email us, call us.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Michael Ryan, Host

HOST RYAN: Well, we've run out of time.

We'd like to thank you at home for watching Jury Duty: You Make a Difference on BNN.

Just remember, if you have any questions regarding your juror service, you can always call us at our toll free number.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, For More Information Call 1-800-THE-JURY, 1-800-843-5879

MS. SHAW: 1-800-843-5879.

Title Card: JURY DUTY, Michael Ryan, Host

HOST RYAN: And we're also online at.

MS. SHAW: MAJury.gov.

HOST RYAN: So just remember you do make a difference. Please serve when called. It's important to all of us.

Thank you, Jen.

MS. SHAW: Thank you.

HOST RYAN: And thank you at home.

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