



California Grand Jurors' Association

Suggestions for Chapters' Civil Grand Juror Recruitment Activities

There are many activities a CGJA chapter or a past grand jurors' association can undertake to encourage citizens to apply for civil grand jury service.

In some counties, the chapter works closely with the court to recruit applicants. In others, there is no ongoing relationship between the court and the chapter. We have divided up our suggested recruitment tasks according to whether the chapter works with the court, or works independently.

Activities that Do Not Require Court Involvement or Approval

There are many ways for a chapter to get the word out about the value of civil grand jury service and the personal satisfaction jurors derive from serving, and thus encourage citizens to apply. Some approaches for chapters to use are:

- Form a speakers' bureau in your chapter. Have its members develop a presentation (perhaps using PowerPoint) to describe the civil grand jury, what grand jurors do, and the application process (CGJA can provide your chapter a sample Power Point presentation you can modify and use)
- Send your speakers out into the community to "sell" civil grand jury service to local civic groups and clubs, service organizations, church groups, leadership councils, neighborhood associations, or the local chapter of the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, or the American Association of University Women, etc.
- Have your speakers give a brief presentation encouraging civil grand juror applications during the "open comment period" at board of supervisors and city council meetings
- Ask the board of supervisors to proclaim February or March as your county's Civil Grand Jury Awareness Month (we can provide sample proclamations)
- Prepare op/ed pieces and letters to the editor for the local media, describing the civil grand jury and encouraging citizens to apply
- Prepare articles for insertion in the newsletters of local groups, such as the League of Women Voters, the local bar association, Soroptimists, etc.

- Hang banners and posters about applying for civil grand jury service
- Set up an information booth at local fairs, farmers' markets, or other public gatherings to discuss civil grand jury service, show off recent civil grand jury reports, and tout the accomplishments of your civil grand jury
- Contact any businesses that have reader boards to ask them to run a message stating that applications are being accepted and giving the website address where the application can be found
- Arrange for interviews of chapter members by local radio or TV stations
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) to announce that volunteers are being sought to apply to serve on the civil grand jury, and provide a link to the application on the civil grand jury website
- Take steps to publicize any significant civil grand jury reports that are released during the application period

Activities that Ordinarily Require Court Approval or Funding

Some recruitment activities are best done with court approval or require expenditures beyond the funds available to the chapter and must therefore be subsidized by the court. (See below for ideas on forging a relationship with your court.)

- Prepare a brochure "selling" the civil grand jury; have the court approve it; and then distribute copies at various places within the county: the jury assembly room, public and college libraries, senior apartment complexes, local businesses, etc.
- Develop and conduct a "Grand Jury Informational Meeting" to take place two weeks or so before the application deadline. Invite the local media to attend. The program might include a brief PowerPoint presentation and a Q&A session. A representative from the court can be present to describe the application and screening process. Hand out your brochure and the application (unless your court accepts only electronic applications)
- Publicize the informational meeting in the local media, by hanging banners and posters, through social media, or by any other means
- Draft language to be placed on the civil grand jury's or court's website referring to the informational meeting, encouraging applications, and linking to the application

- If the court does not use a fillable on-line application, encourage it to do so
- Develop a series of display advertisements to be placed in local newspapers and on news websites. It could include three ads announcing: the opening of the application period, the informational meeting, and finally, the closing of the application period
- Develop and place public service announcements for TV and radio
- Develop a brief video (or use CGJA's *Agents of Change* video; on our website) to be played in the jury assembly room for persons summoned for regular jury duty. It can be played just during the application period
- If it doesn't already do so, suggest that the court seek applicants through NeoGov or some other recruitment sites
- Review the application against those used in other counties and if yours could be improved, provide suggestions to the court
- Suggest to the court that it send letters to former civil grand jurors (those who served more than one year ago) to encourage them to apply
- Develop a 90-minute "pre-orientation program" for those persons chosen for the pool, describing what jurors do during their year of service and answering any questions (we can provide an example of a pre-orientation program that can be tailored to your county)
- Purchase and distribute copies of CGJA's booklet, *California's Civil Grand Juries*

Screening and Selecting the Pool; Juror Orientation

A few chapters assist the court in its selection of the applicants whose names will be placed in the pool. These activities include reviewing and ranking the applications, contacting and reporting to the court about the applicants' references, and having a chapter member take part in the interviews.

Chapters can also conduct an orientation program to help the jury begin getting organized and informed about their duties before the jurors attend CGJA training. Juror alternates attend any part of the program that will not involve matters that can only be discussed in a formal civil grand jury meeting (such as voting on rules, committees, or officers).

The orientation program, which begins immediately after the civil grand jury is impaneled, provides an overview of how the civil grand jury operates in that particular county. It covers “housekeeping” matters related to the jury’s facilities and juror expenses. The civil grand jury’s legal advisor usually gives a presentation to explain his or her role. Most orientation programs include presentations by local officials about local government. CGJA can provide a sample curriculum for your chapter to modify to meet local needs.

Establishing a Relationship with the Court

Several of our suggested activities need court approval, and others are too expensive for chapters themselves to afford.

We recommend that a chapter that wants to take part in recruiting, selection, or orientation activities, and wants financial assistance to do so, take steps to develop a good working relationship with the court. This is not always easy, and may require an extended period of time to accomplish.

Keep in mind that the judge in charge of overseeing the civil grand jury (the presiding judge or “supervising” judge) will change every so often. An incoming judge might know next to nothing about the civil grand jury, let alone CGJA or your chapter.

The first step is to figure out what your chapter wants to do for your court and the civil grand jury. Make a list, and make sure it’s fairly specific. Include only those tasks that are feasible. Whenever possible, be able to point to similar activities being conducted by chapters in other (preferably nearby) counties. Be ready to tout the work of CGJA and emphasize your chapter’s connection to the statewide 501(c)(3) organization. Assure the judge that in helping the court carry out its duty to recruit civil grand jurors, your chapter will always conduct itself within the boundaries set by the court.

Schedule a 20-minute meeting with the judge or court executive officer (CEO). Have a written agenda. It should include a little time for you to explain what a CGJA chapter is and what chapters do throughout the state to support civil grand juries and help the court with recruitment. The agenda should also list the specific tasks you are offering to perform.

Consider bringing some paperwork with you that will help prove you are bona fide – such as copies of CGJA’s *Journal* (which almost always contains articles about chapter activities), and maybe a copy of your chapter’s bylaws.

Remember, if the judge doesn’t know and trust you or your chapter, he or she will be very skeptical of allowing you to take a role in an important court function such as grand juror recruitment. Sell yourself, in a very professional way.

As to court funding of chapter recruitment efforts, at least one superior court (Shasta) has a contract with the chapter to fund those activities. But it might be smart to start off by offering to do those tasks that have no cost, and then once you have established a good relationship with the court, suggest that it fund such tasks as placing ads in the newspaper or hiring a PR firm to produce and place public service announcements.

The judge or CEO might want some time to think about your offer to assist with recruitment. If you don't hear back within a week or two, send him or her an email reiterating your main points and perhaps referring the judge to CGJA's website. You might also recommend that the judge contact judges in counties where the chapters do help with recruitment, or suggest he or she contact CGJA's president.

Note to CGJA chapters:

We see this list as a work in progress. We welcome your additional ideas about how chapters can help the court recruit civil grand jurors or how a chapter can establish an effective working relationship with the court. Please contact our Membership Relations Committee (MRC) at MRC@cgja.org at any time with your input.

We also hope that you will share with us samples of your display ads, speakers' bureau discussion points, brochures, "civil grand jury awareness month" proclamations, letters to the editor, or curriculum outlines for informational meetings or orientation programs, and links to public service announcements – anything that other chapters might want to use when developing their own marketing packet.

We will be posting these documents on our website so they can be shared with other chapters and will periodically update this page with the materials we receive. Thank you in advance for helping us make CGJA's website more valuable for our chapters.