



For Immediate Release

TIM CURRY CRIMINAL JUSTICE CENTER

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eRESPONSE A QUIET SUCCESS

Tarrant County Jury Services innovations increase efficiency, produce substantial savings

(Fort Worth, TX) - As the third largest county in Texas, Tarrant County requires a large, responsive pool of potential jurors to facilitate the thousands of cases handled each year. In the last few years, Tarrant County Jury Services, managed by Jury Bailiff Paula Giaimo Morales, has integrated significant improvements and innovations to its procedures and practices that have provided a more efficient, convenient and cost-effective system for Tarrant residents.

Tarrant County Jury Services serves 51 courts by summoning up to 6,000 people five days a week. When summoned, jurors now have the choice of using the online eResponse system, or the traditional option of showing up in person. Using the eResponse system, jurors can confirm their jury service date or request exemptions, disqualifications, or deferrals of the date of service. These jurors are then emailed their court assignments or responses to their excusal requests. The email gives instructions on where and when the juror should report, as well as an embedded link to the court-specific questionnaire, so all necessary paperwork is completed before their appearance for court.

If a court cancels or is delayed, Jury Services is able to notify the eResponse-registered jurors via automated phone calls and emails, and if the trial is cancelled, the juror is notified not to appear. As all jurors who appear in person or report directly to the court are paid upon dismissal, this advance notice not to appear saves the County the money that would have been paid to those jurors who weren't needed. Jurors' use of the eResponse system grows each year, from 29 percent in its first year to 65 percent of jurors thus far in 2015. Over time this has produced a significant financial savings for Tarrant County.

"Our system wasn't broken, but we knew we could make it better," said Paula Giaimo Morales. "Implementation of our online system has made the process more convenient for both the jurors and our staff, and by allowing an efficient and effective way to notify jurors in advance of court cancellations, it has saved Tarrant County citizens more than \$300,000 in the last three years."

"I have received nothing but extremely positive feedback about the convenience of eResponse from jury panels in my court," said State District Court Judge Mollee Westfall. "I myself was summoned for jury service this year and used eResponse. I was able to defer my service online due to a family vacation, fill out my juror questionnaire at my home over the weekend before jury selection and was notified about my panel's cancellation before I reported for jury selection by phone call and email. The whole process was seamless and user-friendly."

The success of Tarrant County Jury Services' system has inspired other counties, such as Nueces, to move to similar programs.

"This is one of those programs championed by the judges that hasn't gotten a lot of notice, but quietly has been making a huge difference behind the scenes," said Criminal District Attorney, Sharen Wilson. "Jurors can be assigned to their courts, notified of changes, or excused before they ever appear, resulting in a less frustrated jury pool and more efficient selection system. Paula Giaimo Morales is a real asset to all of us at the Courthouse."

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