

## General Rules for Juror Conduct During Trial

### Inspecting the Scene—

Jurors may only inspect places or things related to a trial when ordered by the judge. Unauthorized inspections are improper and could force a retrial.

### Discussing the Case—

Jurors must avoid discussing the case with anyone before or during trial, and should notify the judge or bailiff if someone persists in talking about the case despite attempts to stop them.

### News Accounts—

Jurors should avoid all media coverage and independent research about the case during trial to maintain an open mind until all evidence, arguments, and court instructions have been presented.

### Discussion with Parties or

Lawyers—Jurors should avoid all communication with parties, witnesses, and lawyers during the trial to prevent any appearance of impropriety.

**Punctuality**—Jurors must be punctual for court duty or risk contempt fines, and should notify the clerk's office of any unavoidable delays.

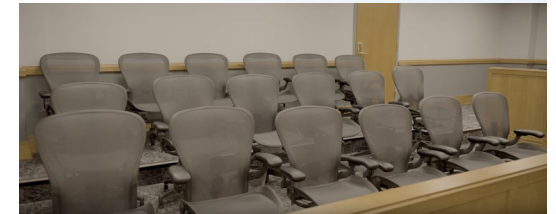
### **Personal Problems or Emergencies—**

Jurors should promptly inform the judge, either through court personnel or in private, about any personal emergencies or problems that might affect their service during trial.



*To provide the people,  
through an independent  
judiciary, equal access to fair  
and timely resolution of  
disputes under law.*

## Jury Service in North Dakota



### **A Civic Duty**

As a citizen, jury service is both a privilege and a civic responsibility. You have been selected to serve as a trial juror in the North Dakota Court System—a meaningful way to contribute to your community. Your participation helps ensure a fair and effective justice system, and your service is both valued and respected.



### **Purpose**

A justice system exists to fairly and peacefully resolve disputes and protect both public safety and individual rights. Every citizen shares the responsibility to uphold this system to preserve life, liberty, and property.

### **Role of the Judge and Jury**

The judge oversees the trial by resolving legal questions and instructing the jury on the law, but cannot change or disregard the law. The jury is responsible for determining the facts of the case and applying the judge's legal instructions to reach a verdict.

### **Jury Selection**

Jury selection begins with forming the "jury panel," which may include alternate jurors in case someone must be excused during the trial. The judge introduces the case and parties, and the attorneys question potential jurors to identify any possible bias. Attorneys may request to excuse

jurors through "challenges," which help ensure a fair trial—some require a reason, while others do not.

### **Opening Statements**

After the jury is sworn in, each side gives opening statements outlining their claims, which are not evidence but must be proven through the trial.

### **Presentation of Evidence**

Evidence is presented through witness testimony and exhibits, with the plaintiff or prosecutor going first, followed by the defense and any possible rebuttal. Jurors may only consider evidence allowed by the judge and must not rely on personal knowledge or outside information.

### **Examination of Witnesses**

During a trial, each party may call witnesses who are questioned to present relevant facts that have bearing on the case and about which the witnesses have knowledge. The judge's decisions throughout witness examination are based solely on legal requirements

### **Conferences and Delays During Trial**

At times, the judge may speak privately with the attorneys or excuse the jury to discuss legal issues, which helps avoid confusion and often speeds up the trial. Other delays—such as witness scheduling, technical issues, legal research, or settlement talks—may also occur, so jurors should be prepared to be patient.

### **Closing Arguments**

After all evidence is presented, each side gives closing arguments, explaining why their position should prevail.

### **Jury Instructions**

After closing arguments, the judge explains the legal rules and questions the jury must decide. Jurors can request clarification if they're unsure about the instructions.

### **Jury Deliberations**

After receiving the judge's instructions, the jury moves to the jury room to review the evidence and reach a final verdict. The first step is choosing a foreperson to lead discussions, ensure fairness, and represent the jury in court. Jurors are expected to respectfully share their views, work through disagreements, and reach a fair and honest verdict together.

### **The Verdict**

Once a verdict is reached, it is read in open court. Jurors may be individually asked to confirm it, and then the jury is discharged, completing their service.

### **After the Trial**

After the trial, jurors are not required to discuss the case and should not reveal how others voted.