



## Preparing for Your Shift

- It may seem super obvious, but make sure you have printed forms, a pen. I also bring a book or magazine to read during slow moments, a scarf in case of a draft, and a pack of tissues. You might also want to have a hard copy of the form instructions and some blank paper to jot down questions or observations.
- When they say no phones, they mean no phones. You will be required to lock up all electronics in the lobby. Embrace being out of touch for a few hours!
- There is sometimes curiosity—from attorneys, interpreters, judges, officers, and members of the public—about Court Watch and why you're taking notes. Having an "elevator pitch" will be helpful. Mine is super simple: “Court Watch is interested in WA state bail practices. We are in the early phase, and are testing the forms we’ve been developing for recording and reporting purposes.”

## During Your Shift

- Sit in the second or third row to see and hear clearly (give deference to family members who are in attendance). Find your comfort zone. Sitting off-center may improve your view.
- It’s totally, totally normal to feel overwhelmed, confused, and lost when you first start. It’s set up for the convenience of those who work for the system, not for defendants, family members, or observers.
- As long as you are doing your best to listen, understand, and record, then you are filling out your form correctly. You’ll likely be unable to hear some information or it might not make sense—that happens to everyone. Often the court officers speak quietly, and attorneys and judges don’t always speak into their mics. You don’t need to capture every single detail for the information to be useful. Court Watch data is messy—you’re not going to make it worse. Just being there is extremely important and hopefully changes the behavior of the ADA and judge in real time.

- Court will often go out of session—suddenly you'll realize that it's been several minutes since a case was called, the judge and lawyers and other court workers are puttering around, and the noise level may have changed. This is your chance to pull out your book, use the bathroom, step out for a quick snack or to check your phone, etc. Be sure to rise when the judge enters or leaves the session.

## **After Your Shift**

- Take a few minutes to debrief with your fellow watchers. You can clear up confusion or commiserate - either way it will help you process the experience. If you're on your own for a shift, debrief to a friend or family member.
- Check the Court Watch training materials or go online to clarify any questions you had about specific terms, lingo, or processes (we'll be setting up a resources section on the 'Court Watch' page on the website soon). If you can't find the answer, send your question to [info@courtwatchwa.org](mailto:info@courtwatchwa.org).
- Make sure you fill out the data survey form after every shift. You will need to enter one form for every case you recorded.
- Sign up for your next shift! The more you watch, the more familiar you'll get with the flow, process, and lingo. You might find it helpful to watch at the same time/location for a while. If you see the same lawyers, judges, and court officers, you'll become accustomed to their actions and approach. Bonus is that you'll establish yourself and Court Watch as a consistent presence as they will come to recognize you too.