

## The Multnomah County Justice Center



The Justice Center is a branch of Multnomah County's Circuit Court system exclusively set up to hear cases involving violations and to conduct **arraignments** for criminal defendants. An arraignment is the first appearance in a criminal case, where the charges are read to the person being accused of a crime. At this time, the person being accused of a crime will generally enter a "Not Guilty" plea, and a future court date will be set by the judge.

The four courtrooms in the Justice Center are set up to perform an arraignment for a specific kind of criminal offense. Courtroom 1 is the Preliminary hearings room. Courtroom 2 conducts arraignments for probation violations and DUI offenses. Courtroom 3 holds hearings

for felony arraignments and Courtroom 4 conducts arraignments for misdemeanors. Felonies and misdemeanors describe the seriousness of the crime involved in a criminal case according to the terms of the punishment prescribed by the Legislature. In Oregon, punishment for a felony may include a prison sentence that lasts longer than 1 year. Punishment for a misdemeanor includes a prison sentence that is less than one year.

At the arraignment if the defendant enters a "guilty" plea, the judge will usually hold an evidentiary hearing to determine if sentencing should continue. If the defendant enters a "not guilty" plea, the judge will set a date for the defendant's trial. The trial will take place in the Multnomah County Courthouse.

### Courtrooms in the Justice Center.

Courtroom	Function
1	Preliminary Hearings
2	Probation Violations arraignments and DUI
3	Felony Arraignments
4	Misdemeanor Arraignments

The Justice Center houses Multnomah County's Community Court. Community Court provides an alternative medium for those charged with nonviolent misdemeanor crimes, often a drug or alcohol related offense, to go through a restitution process in order to have the charges against them deferred.

Community Court provides a special opportunity for students to learn about some of the innovative ways the justice system is responding to provide alternative ways to resolve offenses for non-violent misdemeanors. Final resolution of a case in Community Court requires the defendant to enter a guilty plea. The defendant is subsequently given a referral by the court to complete some sort of restitution process that may involve community service or a treatment program if the misdemeanor involved a drug or alcohol related offense. If the defendant successfully completes the requirements the judge orders as part of their restitution, the charges against them will be dismissed. This method of resolving disputes saves the justice system resources that would otherwise be expended to punish the defendant that may include time in jail. It also provides first time offenders the opportunity to get specific treatment such as counseling as part of their restitution.

