



California Jury Instructions

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Background

In 1996 the [Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement](#) reported that jury instructions could be made more useful to the jury if they were redrafted in more understandable language. The commission stated that "jury instructions as presently given in California and elsewhere are, on occasion, simply impenetrable to the ordinary juror." In response to the commission's recommendation, the Judicial Council created the Task Force on Jury Instructions in 1997.

Justice Carol A. Corrigan, now of the California Supreme Court, was chair of the task force. Justice James D. Ward formerly of the Fourth Appellate District was vice-chair. Justice Corrigan led the Criminal Subcommittee, which completed a new set of criminal jury instructions (called CALCRIM). CALCRIM was approved by the Judicial Council in 2005. Justice Ward directed the Civil Subcommittee, which included appellate justices, trial judges, attorneys from various segments of the bar, lay people, and academics. The CACI civil instructions and special verdict forms were drafted and edited by the subcommittee, reviewed by experts in the various areas of law, and circulated for public comment.

About the Judicial Council of California Civil Jury Instructions (CACI)

The Judicial Council at its July 2003 meeting unanimously approved approximately 800 new civil jury instructions and special verdict forms for use in California trial courts. In introducing the instructions, Chief Justice Ronald M. George stated:

The new plain English jury instructions are a major contribution to the Judicial Council's historic efforts to reform the California jury system. The new simplified jury instructions will help ensure that jurors understand the law and apply it correctly during their deliberations.

The official instructions are the culmination of years of work by the Task Force on Jury Instructions. Its mission was to draft comprehensive, legally accurate jury instructions that are readily understood by the average juror. Rule [\(2.1050\(a\)\)](#) provides:

The California jury instructions approved by the Judicial Council are the official instructions for use in the state of California. The goal of these instructions is to improve the quality of jury decision making by providing standardized instructions that accurately state the law in a way that is understandable to the average juror.

The Judicial Council received the **2003 Burton Award for Outstanding Reform**, a national award for clear legal writing, from the Burton Foundation for the council's role in drafting California's new jury instructions.

These official Judicial Council Civil Jury Instructions are referred to as "CACI" (pronounced "Kay See"), which stands for California Civil Instructions.

Civil Jury Instructions Advisory Committee

Regularly reviews case law and statutes affecting jury instructions and makes recommendations to the council for updating, amending, and adding topics to the council's civil jury instructions.

Key projects of the Civil Jury Instructions Advisory Committee are outlined in the [annual agenda](#) .

[Membership list](#) 