

Open Meeting Law Guide

General Requirements

1. Wisconsin's Open Meeting Law provides that all meetings of governmental bodies, including subcommittees, shall be open to all citizens at all times. Sec. 19.81(2), Wis. Stats.
2. Meetings of local governing bodies or their subunits must be held in places reasonably accessible to the public.
3. Meetings are open to all members of the public unless specifically provided otherwise by law.
4. When members of a governmental body gather in sufficient numbers to compose a quorum, that meeting is presumed to be convened for the purpose of conducting official business. Such a meeting is in violation of The Open Meeting Law if proper notice was not given and the meeting is not open to the public. Sec. 19.82(2), Wis. Stats.
5. The Open Meeting Law applies when members of a governmental body meet with a purpose to engage in government business and the number of members present is sufficient to determine the parent body's course of action regarding the proposal being discussed. State ex rel. Newspapers v. Showers, 135 Wis.2d 77, 398 N.W.2d 154 (1987).
6. A meeting is covered by the Open Meeting Law even where the governmental body is not empowered to exercise the final powers of its parent body (ex. advisory committee to governing body). State v. Swanson, 92 Wis.2d 310, 284 N.W.2d 655 (1979).
7. A private home may qualify as a "meeting place" under Sec. 19.82(3), Wis. Stats. 67 Atty. Gen. 125.
8. A telephone conference call involving members of a governmental body is a "meeting" under the Open Meeting Law and it shall be reasonably accessible to the public and proper notice of such meeting must be given. 69 Atty. Gen. 143.
9. No duly elected or appointed member of a governmental body may be excluded from any meeting of such body. Sec. 19.89, Wis. Stats.