



Group Insurance Board

Adopted: November 13, 2012

Revised: January 19, 2012

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

This Communications Policy is intended to ensure that communications by the Group Insurance Board (Board) members are handled appropriately and in a manner that best serves the participants in the insurance programs under the Board's authority. Board members are expected to be professional and courteous in all communications. Communications by Board members shall be consistent with their duty to represent the interests of all participants.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BOARD MEMBERS AT BOARD MEETINGS

Board members should communicate in an open and constructive manner during meetings of the Board and its Committees. Board members must conduct meetings according to Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law. When a quorum of the Board or a Committee of the Board meets, the meeting must be open to the public, held only after proper notice is given, and be recorded with proper minutes. However, the Board may conduct certain business in closed session, in accordance with Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law. Informal gatherings of Board members for social purposes are not considered public meetings under the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law or this Policy.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BOARD MEMBERS OUTSIDE OF BOARD MEETINGS

Any Board member may contact the Chair, or in his or her absence, the Vice-Chair, regarding issues of interest or concern about the insurance programs under the Board's authority. Board members are to contact the Board Chair or the appropriate Department of Employee Trust Funds (Department) official if they wish to have specific issues discussed by the Board so that these items can be added to the Board meeting agenda.

Board members must not engage in mass or sequential e-mail exchanges with other Board members relating to insurance program matters. The Wisconsin Attorney General strongly discourages governmental bodies from using electronic mail to communicate about issues within the body's realm of authority, because of the risk of conducting a "meeting" in violation of the Open Meetings Law.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT SECRETARY (OR DESIGNEE) AND THE BOARD

Notice and information for special and regularly scheduled quarterly Board meetings will be sent to all Board members before the meetings. The Board may meet at any other time by unanimous mutual consent. The Department Secretary shall communicate with

the Board between meetings when issues arise that require their immediate attention and consideration and may communicate other issues of interest to the Board.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND DEPARTMENT STAFF

If a Board member needs insurance program information, the primary contacts are the managers of the Department's Division of Insurance Services, including the Division Administrator and the Division's Bureau Directors. Board members may contact Board Liaisons directly regarding meeting schedules, travel arrangements, reimbursements, and other administrative matters.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND A SERVICE PROVIDER OR THIRD PARTY

If a Board member is contacted by anyone with a future interest in doing business with the Board, the Board member should refer the individual to the Department's Secretary. The Secretary may refer the matter to the appropriate Department staff or other advisors to evaluate the business inquiry or solicitation.

When a Board member discusses insurance program business with a vendor outside of a Board meeting, that Board member's independence may be perceived as compromised and could result in the Board member's disqualification from formal consideration of any related matters by the Board.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND AN EXTERNAL PARTY

If a Board member is asked to make a presentation to an external group, the Board member must indicate that he or she is not speaking on behalf of the Board, unless the Board member has specifically been authorized to do so by the Board. Board members shall be respectful of the Board, its policies, and its decisions in all external communications, even if the Board member disagrees with the Board's decision. The Board should speak with a single voice for the benefit of all participants.

Board members are encouraged to provide presentation materials related to Department benefit programs to the Department for review prior to distribution or publication. This will help to ensure accuracy of materials related to Department programs and to ensure the programs are not inadvertently placed at risk.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND PARTICIPANTS

Board members are discouraged from counseling participants about individual benefits. When a Board member discusses insurance benefits with a participant outside of a Board meeting, that Board member's independence may be compromised and could result in the member's disqualification from subsequent formal consideration of any related matters by the Board. Providing specific benefit information to participants is

generally outside the scope of Board member duties and responsibilities. Board members should either relay the participant's inquiry to the appropriate person at the Department or encourage the member to contact the Department directly to talk to staff.

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN A BOARD MEMBER AND THE MEDIA

The Department's Secretary and the Board Chair are the only two individuals authorized to speak on behalf of the Board. The primary media contact for the insurance programs is the Department's Secretary or the Secretary's designee. The Department's Secretary may designate another staff person as a spokesperson, depending on the topic of inquiry by the press. When a statement from the Board is required, the Board Chair will serve as the spokesperson. If the Board Chair is unavailable, the Vice-Chair will serve as the spokesperson.