

Government in the Sunshine

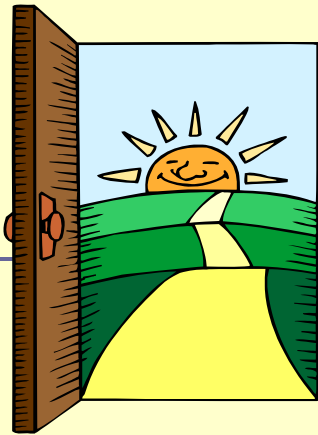
Safeguarding the Public's Right
to Know

VPSC Mid-Year Meeting

July 11-12, 2011

Florida Department of Education

Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice



What is the Sunshine Law?

- Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law ensures the public's right of access to governmental **meetings** and **records**.
- All public institutions must adhere to Florida's Sunshine Laws.

Open Meetings

- Virtually all state and local public bodies, whether elected or appointed, are subject to the open meetings requirements.



For your meetings, this means:

- Meetings must be **open and accessible** to the public;



- **Reasonable notice** of such meetings must be given; and



- **Minutes** of the meetings must be taken.



What is a “meeting”?

- Any time **two or more members** discuss matters that are before the council — or foreseeably may come before the council — the discussion is regarded as a meeting.
 - This applies to informal encounters or discussions as well as formal meetings and actions.
 - There is no requirement for a quorum to be present for the meeting to be covered under the law.

Public Records

- Public records are all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business which are used to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge. These may include:
 - Written documents such as papers, letters, e-mails, tweets, blogs, maps, books, etc., and
 - Non-written records such as tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software or other material connected with the transaction of official business.



Does personal information have to be made public?

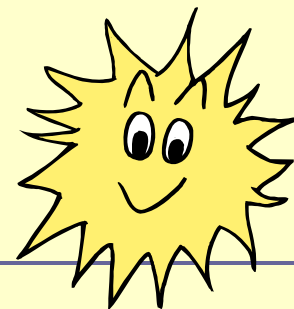
- No. Portions of public records which are confidential, such as social security numbers, medical records and so on, must be redacted before the document can be released to the public.

How does an individual obtain public records?



- A request for public records may be made in person, over the phone or in writing. The requester is not obligated to disclose the reason for the request.
 - A custodian of public records must honor the request, provided any applicable fees are paid.
 - If a public records request is denied on the basis that it is exempt from inspection, the custodian must state the basis for that exemption including the statutory citation.

To learn more...



- For more information on Florida's Sunshine Law, you can download the [Government in the Sunshine Manual](#), compiled by the Attorney General's Office and published annually by the **First Amendment Foundation**.
- The "Sunshine" Law, [Chapter 286](#) of the Florida Statutes