

**193F—8.9(17A,272C,543D) Informal discussion.** If the disciplinary committee considers it advisable, or if requested by the affected licensee, the committee may grant the licensee any opportunity to appear before the committee for a voluntary informal discussion of the facts and circumstances of an alleged violation, subject to the provisions of this rule.

**8.9(1)** An informal discussion is intended to provide a licensee an opportunity to share in an informal setting the licensee's side of a complaint before the board determines whether probable cause exists to initiate a disciplinary proceeding. Licensees are not required to attend an informal discussion. Because disciplinary investigations are confidential, licensees may not bring other persons with them to an informal discussion, but licensees may be represented by legal counsel.

**8.9(2)** Unless disqualification is waived by the licensee, board members or staff who personally investigate a disciplinary complaint are disqualified from making decisions or assisting the decision makers at a later formal hearing. Because board members generally rely upon investigators, peer review committees, or expert consultants to conduct investigations, the issue rarely arises. An informal discussion, however, is a form of investigation because it is conducted in a question and answer format. In order to preserve the ability of all board members to participate in board decision making and to receive the advice of staff, licensees who desire to attend an informal discussion must therefore waive their right to seek disqualification of a board member or staff based solely on the board member's or staff's participation in an informal discussion. Licensees would not be waiving their right to seek disqualification on any other ground. By electing to attend an informal discussion, a licensee accordingly agrees that participating board members or staff are not disqualified from acting as a presiding officer in a later contested case proceeding or from advising the decision maker.

**8.9(3)** Because an informal discussion constitutes a part of the board's investigation of a pending disciplinary case, the facts discussed at the informal discussion may be considered by the board in the event the matter proceeds to a contested case hearing and those facts are independently introduced into evidence.

**8.9(4)** The disciplinary committee, subject to board approval, may propose a consent order at the time of the informal discussion. If the licensee agrees to a consent order, a statement of charges shall be filed simultaneously with the consent order, as provided in rule 193F—20.4(17A,272C).

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