



STATE OF INDIANA

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October 19, 2026

Re: Complaint 26-FC-180
Marissa Turner (Complainant) v.
South Dearborn Community School Corporation (Respondent)

This advisory opinion is issued in response to the above-referenced complaint filed on April 26, 2026.

A Notice of Complaint, along with a copy of the complaint, was sent to the Respondent on April 30, 2026, requesting a formal response by May 26, 2026. A formal response, submitted by Ronald Ross, Superintendent, on behalf of Respondent, was received in this office on May 6, 2026.

The complaint alleges that Respondent violated the Open Door Law (ODL) when it conducted a public meeting in a building with locked exterior doors, and failed to notify the public on how to gain access to the meeting.

ANALYSIS

ODL requires public agencies to conduct and take official actions openly, unless otherwise expressly provided by statute, in order that the people may be fully informed. As a result, ODL requires all meetings of the governing bodies of public agencies to be open at all times to allow members of the public to observe and record the proceedings. IC 5-14-1.5-3(a).

Respondent is a public agency for purposes of ODL, and therefore, subject to the requirements. IC 5-14-1.5-2(a)(1). As a result, unless an exception applies, all meetings of Respondent should be posted by notice and open to the public.

Complainant alleges that Respondent violated ODL when it conducted a public meeting while the exterior doors to the building were locked, barring entry. In its formal response, Respondent notes that it was experiencing issues with its automatic doors, and a sign was posted directing visitors to ring the bell. The

bell was monitored by a secretary who would then allow entry remotely. Complainant alleges that no such signage was posted.

This office opined on similar circumstances in *Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 22-FC-87*. In that matter, it was determined that if a meeting occurs behind locked doors, but “there was a way to flag the attention of those inside in order to open the door,” a public agency may be in compliance with ODL. *Id.* However, if attendees are turned away and unable to gain entry, a violation may have occurred. *Id.*

This office opines now, as it did then, that as this office is not a finder of fact, it cannot unilaterally decide which version of events is accurate. If signage was posted instructing attendees to use the doorbell, no violation may have occurred. However, if such signage was not posted, Respondent may have violated ODL.

Conclusion

This office issues no advisory opinion as to whether Respondent violated ODL. This office recommends Respondent takes all necessary steps to allow attendees the opportunity to observe and participate in public meetings.


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