**

PUBLIC HEARINGS

*Understanding the Aging Unit 3-Year Plan Requirements for Public Hearings*

Before your board can approve your aging plan for final submission to GWAAR, a formal Public Hearing must be held. Public hearings are separate from public input collection done prior to drafting the plan and must follow certain protocol. All public hearings should be documented using the 2025-2027 Public Hearing Report.

**Public Hearing Requirements:**

The aging unit must conduct one or more public hearings prior to submitting the aging unit draft plan to the AAA. Public hearings are an additional opportunity to collect feedback and comments to improve the draft plan. The aging unit should make a sincere effort to solicit participation from older adults by scheduling the hearings at times and in locations where it is convenient for the public to participate, including virtual platforms. Public hearings are separate from the community engagement collection done prior to drafting the plan. Make reasonable efforts to give people who provided input prior to completing the draft plan an opportunity to review and comment during a public hearing.

Public hearings must conform to the following minimum requirements:

* **Time of the Hearing**

Schedule public hearing(s) to allow sufficient time for the aging unit to make any modifications or revisions to the plan based on the comments received at the hearing(s).

* **Public Notice**
	+ Begin official public notification (through public notice processes) at least two weeks prior to the hearing. Public notices commonly appear in newspapers.
	+ Include the date, time, location, and subject of the hearing in the public notice. In addition, indicate the location and hours that the plan is available for examination.
	+ Post an official public hearing notice in a local newspaper and/or online newspaper publication and at least one of the following: aging unit newsletters, radio announcements, television announcements, social media, and written notices sent to agencies, organizations, and individuals known to have an interest in the plan.
	+ Post copies of the notice at nutrition sites and senior centers, at minimum.
	+ Post both written and spoken announcements in languages other than English, where appropriate.
	+ Include a copy of the public hearing notice in the public hearing report and attach as an appendix to the aging plan.
	+ Make an effort to use other sources for communication regarding the public hearing. Consider using Facebook, mailings, or flyers in grab-n-go meals or at meal sites.

* **Location and Number of Hearings**
	+ Chose public hearing locations that are convenient and accessible to older adults including people with disabilities, and large enough to accommodate all who wish to attend.
	+ Hold hearings at several locations in the county and in conjunction with meetings of local aging organizations. Consider holding hearings at nutrition program dining centers, senior centers, and through virtual public meetings.
	+ Avoid holding hearings in conjunction with regular policy-making body and advisory committee meetings.
	+ Hold hearings in each of the counties the aging unit (if multi-county) serves.
	+ Make accessibility provisions when people with hearing or visual impairments, or limited English proficiency are expected to attend.
	+ Consider holding virtual hearings to address public health concerns.
* **Opportunity for Comment**

Allow adequate time at the hearing for interested parties to comment on the plan. In addition, give individuals the option to submit their comments in writing.

* **Summary of Public Hearing Comments**
	+ Summarize public hearing comments and record in the Public Hearing Report.
	+ Attach Public Hearing Report(s) to the appendices of the aging unit plan.
	+ Indicate changes made to the draft version of the plan as a result of input collected during the public hearing.

Note: The public hearing process takes place after the draft plan is written. It is separate from the initial community engagement process that takes place prior to writing the draft plan. Consult the aging plan instructions for additional public hearing requirements.

**Question and Answers:**

**Q. How is a “public hearing” different from a regular meeting?**

A. A Public Hearing is a formal meeting which must follow Open Meeting laws. Basic requirements of the open meeting law are to:

* give advance public notice of the meeting(s) (for Aging Plans, must be 2 weeks in advance)
* conduct all business in open session
* hold the meeting(s) in locations that are “reasonably accessible”

**Q. What does “official public notification through public notice processes” mean?**

A. Official public notification refers to announcing the hearing to the public at least 2 weeks in advance of the meeting. This notification must be given to local newspapers and posted at nutrition sites and senior centers and at least one other place.

**Q. What must be included in the public hearing notice?**

A. Date, time, location, subject of hearing and the location and hours that the draft plan is available for examination prior to the meeting. To ensure all citizens have access to the meeting, include a statement that provisions will be made for people with hearing/visual impairments or for non-English speaking people. (see sample hearing notice below)

**Q. How many public hearings do I have to have?**

A. Ideally, public hearings will be held in several places throughout the county so all citizens have reasonable access to the meeting. In the case of multi-county aging units, there must be a public hearing in each county served by the aging unit. In addition, the plan must be made available for viewing outside the public hearings.

**Q. Can I hold the public hearing along with other meetings/events?**

A. Public hearings should not be held in conjunction with regular board or committee meetings, but could be held with other non-official events, such as after a senior event or public presentation.

**Q. What if nobody attends the public hearing?**

A. It is a requirement of the Wisconsin Elders Act that a public hearing is held prior to approving the plan as a way to collect comments and feedback on the draft plan. Therefore, it is important that public hearings are planned and advertised in a way that draws people to attend and participate.

*SAMPLE HEARING NOTICE:*

Notice of Public Hearing for Cheddar County’s

Plan on Aging 2022-2024

July 30, 2023

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Cheddar County Aging Unit will be conducting public hearings for presentation of and comment on the 2025-2027 Cheddar County Aging Plan. Public hearings will be held at these following times and locations\*:

* Wednesday, August 15 at 3:00 p.m. at the Cheeseville Community Center, 123 West Roquefort Street in Cheeseville
* Thursday, August 16 at 10:30 a.m. at the Stilton Public Library, 456 North Feta Avenue in Stilton
* Friday, August 17 at 1:00 p.m. at West Side Apartments, 789 West 10th Street in Manchego

The purpose of these public hearing is to provide an opportunity for citizens of Cheddar County to comment and provide input on the Aging Plan draft. A draft of the 2025-2027 Cheddar County Aging Plan is available for examination at the Cheddar County Aging Unit, 321 South Colby Street in Cheeseville from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Copies of the Aging Plan will also be available for viewing one hour prior to the start of each hearing at the location of the hearing.

Input received by members of the public at these hearings will be considered in the development of the final draft of this plan. The final draft will be presented for approval at the Cheddar County Aging Unit Board meeting scheduled for 5:00 PM August 28, 2023 at the Cheddar County Aging Unit.

Written comments may be sent to the Cheddar County Aging Unit, 321 South Colby Street, Cheeseville, WI 54321, Attn: Brie Havarti through August 14, 2023.

For more information, contact Brie Havarti, Cheddar County Aging Unit Manager at (123) 456-7890.

\*If you are planning to attend one of the above meetings and will require accommodations (signer, interpreter, etc.) to participate, please call the Cheddar County Aging Unit at least 48 hours prior to the meeting date and time.

* Phone: (123) 456-7890
* Toll Free: 800-456-7890
* TTY: use Relay (711)