

# Question: Will the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) answer questions from local government or do they just handle complaints?



*Editor's Note: This is a monthly column prepared by the Iowa Public Information Board to update Iowans on the IPIB's activities and provide information on some of the issues routinely addressed by the board.*

**ANSWER:** The staff at IPIB is eager to assist local government with questions about how best to comply with Chapters 21 and 22. Most of our informal requests for assistance come from local government – schools, cities, counties, extension, etc. So far this year 184 out of 283 total contacts were for informal assistance. The vast majority of these informal requests are from government officials and employees wanting to comply with Iowa law.

As an example, in April, a call came in from an extension council member concerned about whether a closed session

would be appropriate. IPIB staff discussed the situation and confirmed that he was correct – it was not appropriate to have a closed session in this instance.

A city clerk called to request assistance deciding what to do when a meeting exceeded space capacity. The question led to a discussion about possible alternative action, a resolution to this specific situation and next month's IPIB column!

A discussion about legal theories and competing laws (privacy versus transparency) between IPIB staff and an at-

torney for a local government body led to an agreement for release of previously withheld records and a policy modification.

Often a question is posed that has wide-ranging effects. The IPIB has the ability, with Board action, training and the website, to reach a broad audience around the state and promote consistency state-wide.

So if you're 'stumped' about an issue, check out the IPIB website ([www.ipib.iowa.gov](http://www.ipib.iowa.gov)) or call IPIB staff at 515-725-1781.

## IPIB Facts and Figures

During the month of April 2015, 85 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>APRIL 2015</u>	<u>JAN-APRIL 2015</u>
Formal complaints	11	29
Formal opinions	1	4
Declaratory orders	0	0
Informal complaints	13	58
Informal requests	40	184
Misc.	3	8
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>283</b>