



Legal Glossary

Term	Definition
authority	What government is empowered, but not obligated, to do.
constitution	The fundamental, underlying document which establishes the government of a nation or state.
deliberation (under Open Meeting Law)	An oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction.
duty	What government must do.
home rule	Authority that allows local health agencies to adopt regulations to carry out public health functions without seeking state legislative approval for each specific activity.
Injunction--permanent	Relief ordered by the court after a full hearing on the merits of the complaint. This may be an order to do, or refrain from doing, some action.
Injunction--preliminary	Preliminary interim relief ordered by the court pending a full hearing on the merits of the complaint. This may be an order to do, or refrain from doing, some action.
limits	What government is prohibited from doing.
mandated reporters	Staff members of medical or other public or private institutions, schools or facilities who are required to report the suspected neglect or abuse of children under the age of 18. Staff members include daycare providers, people performing duties on behalf of a religious organization, firefighters, and police.
municipal employee (for the purposes of Conflict of Interest Laws)	Anyone performing services for a city or town, or holding a municipal position, (whether paid or unpaid, including full- and part-time), municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, and consultants.
ordinance	A statute enacted by a city or town.

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preemption	When a law of a higher branch of government (e.g. federal) invalidates a law of a lower branch (e.g. state). The basis of federal preemption is the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution (Article VI, clause 2).
public body (under the Open Meeting Law)	Any multi-member board, commission, council, authority, committee or subcommittee within any county, district, city, region or town, which has been established to serve a public purpose, is subject to the law.
regulation	A law, rule, or other order prescribed by authority.
sovereign	monarch or supreme ruler.
statute	An enactment made by a legislature, signed by the chief executive, and expressed in a formal document.
Supreme Judicial Court	The state's highest court in MA. A court of appellate jurisdiction over a broad range of criminal and civil cases in addition to providing advisory opinions on various legal issues and responsibilities, according to statutes.
warrant	An order issued by the court (e.g. judge or clerk magistrate) that authorizes a search. This includes administrative search warrants that can authorize inspections