CHAPTER 906

EVIDENCE — WITNESSES

NOTE: Extensive comments by the Judicial Council Committee and the Federal Advisory Committee are printed with chs. 901 to 911 in 59 Wis. 2d. The court did not adopt the comments but ordered them printed with the rules for information purposes.

906.01 General rule of competency. Every person is competent to be a witness except as provided by ss. 885.16 and 885.17 or as otherwise provided in these rules.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R157 (1973).

There is no "better evidence rule" that requires the production of an item rather than testimony about the item that is comparable to the "best evidence rule" that requires production of a writing to prove its contents. York v. State, 45 Wis. 2d 550, 173 N.W.2d 693.

The trial court may not declare a witness incompetent to testify, except as provided in this section. A witness's credibility is determined by the fact finder. State v. Hanson, 149 Wis. 2d 474, 439 N.W.2d 133 (Ct. App. 1989).

906.02 Lack of personal knowledge. A witness may not testify to a matter unless evidence is introduced sufficient to support a finding that the witness has personal knowledge of the matter. Evidence to prove personal knowledge may, but need not, consist of the testimony of the witness. This rule is subject to the provisions of s. 907.03 relating to opinion testimony by expert witnesses.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R160 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

A challenge to the admissibility of items taken from the defendant's motel room, on the ground that the chain of custody was not properly established because a police department laboratory chemist who examined the same was not present to testify, could not be sustained under uncontroverted proof that the condition of the exhibits had not been altered by the chemist's examination, there was no unexplained or missing link as to who had had custody, and they were in substantially the same condition at the time of the chemist's examination as when taken from defendant's room. State v. McCarty, 47 Wis. 2d 781, 177 N.W.2d 819.

A challenge to the admissibility of boots on the ground that the victim did not properly identify them was devoid of merit, as it was stipulated that the child said they "could be" the ones she saw. Her lack of certitude did not preclude admissibility, but went to the weight the jury should give to her testimony. Howland v. State, 51 Wis. 2d 162, 186 N.W.2d 319.

906.03 Oath or affirmation. (1) Before testifying, every witness shall be required to declare that the witness will testify truthfully, by oath or affirmation administered in a form calculated to awaken the witness's conscience and impress the witness's mind with the witness's duty to do so.

(2) The oath may be administered substantially in the following form: Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you shall give in this matter shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

(3) Every person who shall declare that the person has conscientious scruples against taking the oath, or swearing in the usual form, shall make a solemn declaration or affirmation, which may be in the following form: Do you solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the testimony you shall give in this matter shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; and this you do under the pains and penalties of perjury.

(4) The assent to the oath or affirmation by the person making it may be manifested by the uplifted hand.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R161 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

A witness who is a young child need not be formally sworn to meet the oath or affirmation requirement. State v. Hanson, 149 Wis. 2d 474, 439 N.W.2d 133 (1989).

906.04 Interpreters. An interpreter is subject to the provisions of chs. 901 to 911 relating to qualification as an expert and the administration of an oath or affirmation that the interpreter will make a true translation.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R162 (1973); 1981 c. 390; 1991 a. 32.

906.05 Competency of judge as witness. The judge presiding at the trial may not testify in that trial as a witness. No objection need be made in order to preserve the point.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R163 (1973).

906.06 Competency of juror as witness. (1) AT THE TRIAL. A member of the jury may not testify as a witness before that jury in the trial of the case in which the member is sitting as a juror. If the juror is called so to testify, the opposing party shall be afforded an opportunity to object out of the presence of the jury.

(2) INQUIRY INTO VALIDITY OF VERDICT OR INDICTMENT. Upon an inquiry into the validity of a verdict or indictment, a juror may not testify as to any matter or statement occurring during the course of the jury's deliberations or to the effect of anything upon the juror's or any other juror's mind or emotions as influencing the juror to assent to or dissent from the verdict or indictment or concerning the juror's mental processes in connection therewith, except that a juror may testify on the question whether extraneous prejudicial information was improperly brought to the jury's attention or whether any outside influence was improperly brought to bear upon any juror. Nor may the juror's affidavit or evidence of any statement by the juror concerning a matter about which the juror would be precluded from testifying be received.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R165 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

A defendant's failure to have evidence excluded under rulings of the court, operates as a waiver. Sub. (2) is cited. State v. Frizzell, 64 Wis. 2d 480, 219 N.W.2d 390.

Impeachment of a verdict through juror affidavits or testimony is discussed. After Hour Welding v. Lanceil Management Co. 108 Wis. 2d 734, 324 N.W.2d 686 (1982).

There was probable prejudice when the question of a depraved mind was central and a juror went to the jury room with a dictionary definition of "depraved" written on a card. State v. Ott, 111 Wis. 2d 691, 331 N.W.2d 629 (Ct. App. 1983).

A conviction was reversed where extraneous information improperly brought to the jury's attention raised a reasonable possibility that error had prejudicial effect on the hypothetical average jury. State v. Poh, 116 Wis. 2d 510, 343 N.W.2d 108 (1984).

Evidence of a juror's racially−prejudiced remark during jury deliberations was not competent under sub. (2). A 3−step procedure for impeachment of a jury verdict is discussed. State v. Shillcutt, 119 Wis. 2d 788, 350 N.W.2d 686 (1984).

In any jury trial, material prejudice on the part of any juror impairs the right to a jury trial. That prejudicial material was brought to only one juror's attention and was not communicated to any other jurors is irrelevant to determining whether that information was "improperly brought to the jury's attention" under sub. (2). Castenada v. Pederson, 185 Wis. 2d 200, 518 N.W.2d 246 (1994), State v. Messelt, 185 Wis. 2d 255, 518 N.W.2d 232 (1994).

Extraneous information is information, other than the general wisdom a juror is expected to possess, that a juror obtains from a non−evidentiary source. A juror who consciously brings non−evidentiary objects to show the other jurors improperly brings extraneous information before the jury. State v. Eison, 188 Wis. 2d 298, 525 N.W.2d 91 (Ct. App. 1994).

Sub. (2) does not limit the testimony of a juror regarding clerical errors in a verdict. A written verdict not reflecting the jury's oral decision may be impeached by showing in a timely manner and beyond a reasonable doubt that all jurors are in agreement that an error was made. State v. Williquette, 190 Wis. 2d 678, 526 N.W.2d 144 (Ct. App. 1995).

An analytical framework to be used to determine whether a new trial on the grounds of prejudice due to extraneous juror information is outlined. State v. Eison, 194 Wis. 2d 160, 533 N.W.2d 738 (1995).

Jurors may rely on their common sense and life experience during deliberations, including expertise a juror may have on a particular subject. That a juror was a pharmacist did not make his knowledge about the particular effect of a drug extraneous information subject to inquiry under sub. (2). State v. Heitkemper, 196 Wis. 2d 218, 538 N.W.2d 561 (Ct. App. 1995).

The extraneous information exception under sub. (2) is not limited to factual information but also includes legal information obtained outside the proceeding. State v. Wulff, 200 Wis. 2d 318, 546 N.W.2d 522 (Ct. App. 1996).

Generally, the sole area jurors are competent to testify to is whether extraneous information was considered. Except where juror bias goes to a fundamental issue such as religion, evidence of juror perceptions is not competent, no matter how mistaken, and cannot form the basis for granting a new trial. Anderson v. Burnett County, 207 Wis. 2d 585, 558 N.W.2d 636 (Ct. App. 1996).

The trial court, and not the defendant or the defendant's attorney, is permitted to question a juror directly at a hearing regarding juror bias. The trial court's discretion in submitting questions suggested by the defendant is limited, but the failure to submit questions is subject to harmless error evaluation. State v. Delgado, 215 Wis. 2d 16, 572 N.W.2d 479 (Ct. App. 1997).

It was reasonable to refuse to allow a former member of the jury from testifying as a witness in the same case. Broadhead v. State Farm Mutual Insurance Co. 217 Wis. 2d 231, 579 N.W.2d 761 (Ct. App. 1998).

For a juror to be competent to testify regarding extraneous information brought to the jury within the sub. (2) exception, the information must be potentially prejudicial, which it may be if it conceivably relates to a central issue of the trial. After determining whether testimony is competent under sub. (2), the court must find clear, satisfactory and convincing evidence that the juror heard or made the comments alleged, and if it does, must then decide whether prejudicial error requiring reversal exists. State v. Broomfield, 223 Wis. 2d 465, 589 N.W.2d 225 (1999).

906.07 Who may impeach. The credibility of a witness may be attacked by any party, including the party calling the witness.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R169 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

906.08 Evidence of character and conduct of witness.

(1) OPINION AND REPUTATION EVIDENCE OF CHARACTER. Except as provided in s. 972.11 (2), the credibility of a witness may be attacked or supported by evidence in the form of reputation or opinion, but subject to the following limitations:

(a) The evidence may refer only to character for truthfulness or untruthfulness.

(b) Except with respect to an accused who testifies in his or her own behalf, evidence of truthful character is admissible only after the character of the witness for truthfulness has been attacked by opinion or reputation evidence or otherwise.

(2) SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF CONDUCT. Specific instances of the conduct of a witness, for the purpose of attacking or supporting the witness's credibility, other than a conviction of a crime or an adjudication of delinquency as provided in s. 906.09, may not be proved by extrinsic evidence. They may, however, subject to s. 972.11 (2), if probative of truthfulness or untruthfulness and not remote in time, be inquired into on cross−examination of the witness or on cross−examination of a witness who testifies to his or her character for truthfulness or untruthfulness.

(3) TESTIMONY BY ACCUSED OR OTHER WITNESSES. The giving of testimony, whether by an accused or by any other witness, does not operate as a waiver of the privilege against self−incrimination when examined with respect to matters which relate only to credibility.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R171 (1973); 1975 c. 184, 421; 1991 a. 32; 1995 a. 77, 225.

The trial court committed plain error by admitting extrinsic impeaching testimony on a collateral issue. McClelland v. State, 84 Wis. 2d 145, 267 N.W.2d 843 (1978).

Where credibility of a witness was a critical issue, exclusion of evidence offered under sub. (1) was grounds for discretionary reversal. State v. Cuyler, 110 Wis. 2d 133, 327 N.W.2d 662 (1983).

Impeachment of an accused by extrinsic evidence on a collateral matter was harmless error. State v. Sonnenberg, 117 Wis. 2d 159, 344 N.W.2d 95 (1984).

Absent an attack on credibility, a complainant's testimony that she had not initiated a civil action for damages was inadmissible when used to bolster credibility. State v. Johnson, 149 Wis. 2d 418, 439 N.W.2d 122 (1989), confirmed, 153 Wis. 2d 121, 449 N.W.2d 845 (1990).

Allegations of professional misconduct against the prosecution's psychiatric expert initially referred to the prosecutor's office but immediately transferred to a special prosecutor for investigation and possible criminal proceedings were properly excluded as a subject of cross−examination of the expert due to a lack of logical connection between the expert and the prosecutor necessary to suggest bias. State v. Lindh, 161 Wis. 2d 324, 468 N.W.2d 168 (1991).

Whether a witness's credibility has been sufficiently attacked to constitute an attack on the witness's character for truthfulness permitting rehabilitating character testimony is a discretionary decision. State v. Anderson, 163 Wis. 2d 342, 471 N.W.2d 279 (Ct. App. 1991).

No witness, expert or otherwise, should be permitted to give an opinion that another mentally and physically competent witness is telling the truth. It was improper for a prosecutor to repeatedly inquire of a defendant whether other witnesses were mistaken in their testimony. State v. Kuehl, 199 Wis. 2d 143, 545 N.W.2d 840 (Ct. App. 1995).

Evidence that an expert in a medical malpractice action was named as a defendant in a separate malpractice action was inadmissible for impeachment purposes under this section because it did not cast light on the expert's character for truthfulness. Nowatske v. Osterloh, 201 Wis. 2d 497, 549 N.W.2d 256 (Ct. App. 1996).

Character evidence may be allowed under sub. (1) (b) based on attacks on the witness's character made in opening statements. Allegations of a single instance of falsehood cannot imply a character for untruthfulness. The attack on the witness must be an assertion that the witness is a liar generally. State v. Eugenio, 219 Wis. 2d 391, 579 N.W.2d 642 (1998).

It was appropriate for an expert to testify to the nature of witnesses' cognitive disabilities and how these mental impairments affected the witnesses' ability to testify or recall particular facts, the expert's testimony that the witnesses were incapable of lying violated the rule that a witness is not permitted to express an opinion on whether another physically and mentally competent witness is telling the truth. State v. Tutlewski, 231 Wis. 2d 379, 605 N.W.2d 561 (1999).

906.09 Impeachment by evidence of conviction of crime or adjudication of delinquency. (1) GENERAL RULE. For the purpose of attacking the credibility of a witness, evidence that the witness has been convicted of a crime or adjudicated delinquent is admissible. The party cross−examining the witness is not concluded by the witness's answer.

(2) EXCLUSION. Evidence of a conviction of a crime or an adjudication of delinquency may be excluded if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the danger of unfair prejudice.

(3) ADMISSIBILITY OF CONVICTION OR ADJUDICATION. No question inquiring with respect to a conviction of a crime or an adjudication of delinquency, nor introduction of evidence with respect thereto, shall be permitted until the judge determines pursuant to s. 901.04 whether the evidence should be excluded.

(5) PENDENCY OF APPEAL. The pendency of an appeal therefrom does not render evidence of a conviction or a delinquency adjudication inadmissible. Evidence of the pendency of an appeal is admissible.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R176 (1973); 1991 a. 32; 1995 a. 77.

This section applies to both civil and criminal actions. Where a plaintiff is asked by his own attorney whether he has ever been convicted of a crime, he can be asked on cross−examination as to the number of times. Underwood v. Strasser, 48 Wis. 2d 568, 180 N.W.2d 631.

It is not error to give an instruction as to prior convictions as affecting credibility when the prior case was "merely a misdemeanor". McKissick v. State, 49 Wis. 2d 537, 182 N.W.2d 282.

Where a defendant's answers on direct examination with respect to the number of his prior convictions are inaccurate or incomplete, then the correct and complete facts may be brought out on cross−examination, during which it is permissible to mention the crime by name in order to insure that the witness understands which particular conviction is being referred to. Nicholas v. State, 49 Wis. 2d 683, 183 N.W.2d 11.

Proffered evidence that a witness had been convicted of drinking offenses 18 times in the last 19 years could be rejected as immaterial where the evidence did not affect his credibility. Barren v. State, 55 Wis. 2d 460, 198 N.W.2d 345.

When the defendant in a rape case denied the incident in an earlier rape case tried in juvenile court, impeachment evidence of a police officer that the defendant had admitted the incident at the time was not barred by sub. (4). Sanford v. State, 76 Wis. 2d 72, 250 N.W.2d 348.

When a witness truthfully acknowledges a prior conviction, inquiry into the nature of the conviction may not be made. Contrary position in 63 Atty. Gen. 424 is incorrect. Voith v. Buser, 83 Wis. 2d 540, 266 N.W.2d 304 (1978).

A defendant's 2 prior convictions for burglary were admissible to prove intent to use gloves, a long pocket knife, a crowbar, and a pillow case as burglarious tools. Vanlue v. State, 96 Wis. 2d 81, 291 N.W.2d 467 (1980).

Cross−examination on prior convictions without the trial court's threshold determination under sub. (3) was prejudicial. Gyrion v. Bauer, 132 Wis. 2d 434, 393 N.W.2d 107 (Ct. App. 1986).

An accepted guilty plea constitutes a "conviction" for purposes of impeachment under sub. (1). State v. Trudeau, 157 Wis. 2d 51, 458 N.W.2d 383 (Ct. App. 1990).

An expunged conviction is not admissible to attack witness credibility. State v. Anderson, 160 Wis. 2d 435, 466 N.W.2d 681 (Ct. App. 1991).

Whether to admit evidence of prior convictions for impeachment purposes requires consideration of: (1) the lapse of time since the conviction, (2) the rehabilitation of the person convicted, (3) the gravity of the crime, and (4) the involvement of dishonesty in the crime. If allowed, the existence and number of convictions may be admitted, but the nature of the convictions may not be discussed. State v. Smith, 203 Wis. 2d 288, 553 N.W.2d 824 (Ct. App. 1996).

Evidence that exposed a witness's prior life sentences and that he could suffer no penal consequences from confessing to the crime in question was properly admitted. State v. Scott, 2000 WI App 51, 234 Wis. 2d 129, 608 N.W.2d 753.

906.10 Religious beliefs or opinions. Evidence of the beliefs or opinions of a witness on matters of religion is not admissible for the purpose of showing that by reason of their nature the witness's credibility is impaired or enhanced.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R184 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

906.11 Mode and order of interrogation and presentation. (1) CONTROL BY JUDGE. The judge shall exercise reasonable control over the mode and order of interrogating witnesses and presenting evidence so as to do all of the following:

(a) Make the interrogation and presentation effective for the ascertainment of the truth.

(b) Avoid needless consumption of time.

(c) Protect witnesses from harassment or undue embarrassment.

(2) SCOPE OF CROSS−EXAMINATION. A witness may be cross−examined on any matter relevant to any issue in the case, including credibility. In the interests of justice, the judge may limit cross−examination with respect to matters not testified to on direct examination.

(3) LEADING QUESTIONS. Leading questions should not be used on the direct examination of a witness except as may be necessary to develop the witness's testimony. Ordinarily leading questions should be permitted on cross−examination. In civil cases, a party is entitled to call an adverse party or witness identified with the adverse party and interrogate by leading questions.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R185 (1973); 1991 a. 32; 1999 a. 85.

A question is not leading if it merely suggests a subject rather than a specific answer which may not be a true one. Hicks v. State, 47 Wis. 2d 38, 176 N.W.2d 386.

It is error for a trial court to restrict cross−examination of an accomplice who was granted immunity, but the conviction will not be reversed if the error was harmless. State v. Schenk, 53 Wis. 2d 327, 193 N.W.2d 26.

A defendant who testifies in his own behalf may be recalled for further cross−examination to lay a foundation for impeachment. Evidence that on a prior occasion the defendant did not wear glasses and that he had a gun similar to that described by the complainant was admissible when it contradicted earlier testimony of the defendant. Parham v. State, 53 Wis. 2d 458, 192 N.W.2d 838.

A trial judge should not strike the entire testimony of a defense witness for refusal to answer questions bearing on his credibility which had little to do with guilt or innocence of defendant. State v. Monsoor, 56 Wis. 2d 689, 203 N.W.2d 20.

A trial judge's admonitions to an expert witness did not give the appearance of judicial partisanship requiring new trial. Peeples v. Sargent, 77 Wis. 2d 612, 253 N.W.2d 459.

The extent of, manner, and right of multiple cross−examination by different counsel representing the same party can be controlled by the trial court. Hochgurtel v. San Felippo, 78 Wis. 2d 70, 253 N.W.2d 526.

A defendant has no right to be actively represented in court both by himself or herself and by counsel. Moore v. State, 83 Wis. 2d 285, 265 N.W.2d 540 (1978).

Leading questions were properly used to refresh a witness's memory. Jordan v. State, 93 Wis. 2d 449, 287 N.W.2d 509 (1980).

By testifying to his actions on the day a murder was committed, the defendant waived the self−incrimination privilege on cross−examination as to previous actions reasonably related to the direct examination. Neely v. State, 97 Wis. 2d 38, 292 N.W.2d 859 (1980).

The trial court's bifurcation of issues for trial was authorized under sub. (1). Zawistowski v. Kissinger, 160 Wis. 2d 292, 466 N.W.2d 664 (Ct. App. 1991).

The use of leading questions in direct examination of a child is discussed. State v. Barnes, 203 Wis. 2d 132, 552 N.W.2d 857 (Ct. App. 1996).

A chart prepared by the prosecutor during a trial, in the jury's presence, to categorize testimony was not a summary under s. 910.06 but was a "pedagogical device" admissible within the court's discretion under this section. State v. Olson, 217 Wis. 2d 730, 579 N.W.2d 802 (Ct. App. 1998).

The rule of completeness for oral statements is encompassed within this section. A party's use of an out−of−court statement to show an inconsistency does not automatically give the opposing party the right to introduce the whole statement. Under the rule of completeness, the court has discretion to admit only those statements necessary to provide context and prevent distortion. State v. Eugenio, 219 Wis. 2d 391, 579 N.W.2d 642 (1998).

906.12 Writing used to refresh memory. If a witness uses a writing to refresh the witness's memory for the purpose of testifying, either before or while testifying, an adverse party is entitled to have it produced at the hearing, to inspect it, to cross−examine the witness thereon, and to introduce in evidence those portions which relate to the testimony of the witness. If it is claimed that the writing contains matters not related to the subject matter of the testimony, the judge shall examine the writing in camera, excise any portions not so related, and order delivery of the remainder to the party entitled thereto. Any portion withheld over objections shall be preserved and made available to the appellate court in the event of an appeal. If a writing is not produced or delivered pursuant to order under this rule, the judge shall make any order justice requires, except that in criminal cases when the prosecution elects not to comply, the order shall be one striking the testimony or, if the judge in the judge's discretion determines that the interests of justice so require, declaring a mistrial.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R193 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

906.13 Prior statements of witnesses. (1) EXAMINING WITNESS CONCERNING PRIOR STATEMENT. In examining a witness concerning a prior statement made by the witness, whether written or not, the statement need not be shown or its contents disclosed to the witness at that time, but on request the same shall be shown or disclosed to opposing counsel upon the completion of that part of the examination.

(2) EXTRINSIC EVIDENCE OF PRIOR INCONSISTENT STATEMENT OF A WITNESS. (a) Extrinsic evidence of a prior inconsistent statement by a witness is not admissible unless any of the following is applicable:

1. The witness was so examined while testifying as to give the witness an opportunity to explain or to deny the statement.

2. The witness has not been excused from giving further testimony in the action.

3. The interests of justice otherwise require.

(b) Paragraph (a) does not apply to admissions of a party−opponent as defined in s. 908.01 (4) (b).

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R197 (1973); 1991 a. 32; 1999 a. 85.

A witness for the defense could be impeached by prior inconsistent statements to the district attorney even though made in the course of plea bargaining as to a related offense. Taylor v. State, 52 Wis. 2d 453, 190 N.W.2d 208.

A statement by a defendant, not admissible as part of the prosecution's case because taken without the presence of his counsel, may be used on cross−examination for impeachment if the statement is trustworthy. Wold v. State, 57 Wis. 2d 344, 204 N.W.2d 482.

A bright line test for determining whether a defendant's prior inconsistent statement is admissible for impeachment is whether it was compelled. State v. Pickett, 150 Wis. 2d 720, 442 N.W.2d 509 (Ct. App. 1989).

This section is applicable in criminal cases. A defense investigator's reports of witness interviews are statements under sub. (1), but only must be disclosed if defense counsel has examined the witness concerning the statements made to the investigator. State v. Hereford, 195 Wis. 2d 1054, 537 N.W.2d 62 (Ct. App. 1995).

906.14 Calling and interrogation of witnesses by judge. (1) CALLING BY JUDGE. The judge may, on the judge's own motion or at the suggestion of a party, call witnesses, and all parties are entitled to cross−examine witnesses thus called.

(2) INTERROGATION BY JUDGE. The judge may interrogate witnesses, whether called by the judge or by a party.

(3) OBJECTIONS. Objections to the calling of witnesses by the judge or to interrogation by the judge may be made at the time or at the next available opportunity when the jury is not present.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R200 (1973); 1991 a. 32.

A trial judge's elicitation of trial testimony is discussed. Schultz v. State, 82 Wis. 2d 737, 264 N.W.2d 245.

906.15 Exclusion of witnesses. (1) At the request of a party, the judge or court commissioner shall order witnesses excluded so that they cannot hear the testimony of other witnesses. The judge or court commissioner may also make the order of his or her own motion.

(2) Subsection (1) does not authorize exclusion of any of the following:

(a) A party who is a natural person.

(b) An officer or employee of a party which is not a natural person designated as its representative by its attorney.

(c) A person whose presence is shown by a party to be essential to the presentation of the party's cause.

(d) A victim, as defined in s. 950.02 (4), in a criminal case or a victim, as defined in s. 938.02 (20m), in a delinquency proceeding under ch. 938, unless the judge or court commissioner finds that exclusion of the victim is necessary to provide a fair trial for the defendant or a fair fact−finding hearing for the juvenile. The presence of a victim during the testimony of other witnesses may not by itself be a basis for a finding that exclusion of the victim is

necessary to provide a fair trial for the defendant or a fair fact−finding hearing for the juvenile.

(3) The judge or court commissioner may direct that all excluded and non−excluded witnesses be kept separate until called and may prevent them from communicating with one another until they have been examined or the hearing is ended.

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 59 Wis. 2d R1, R202 (1973); 1991 a. 32; 1997 a. 181.