

Understanding Bond and Bail in Wisconsin

What Is a Bond?

A bond is the court's order that allows a defendant to be released from jail while the criminal case is pending. The bond also includes rules the defendant must follow after being released. These rules are called bond conditions.

Bond conditions are designed to:

- Help protect victims and witnesses.
- Help protect the community.
- Make sure the defendant returns to court.

Common bond conditions include:

- No contact or limited contact with the victim or witnesses.
- Staying away from certain places, such as a home, school, or workplace.
- Not committing any new crimes.
- Not possessing firearms or other dangerous weapons.
- Not using alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Following any other conditions ordered by the judge.

If the defendant does not follow these conditions, the court may issue an arrest warrant, file additional criminal charges, or change or revoke the bond.

What Is the Difference Between a Signature Bond and a Cash Bond?

A **signature bond** allows the defendant to be released without paying money up front. Instead, the defendant signs a written promise to:

- Follow all bond conditions.
- Return to court for every scheduled hearing.

If the defendant fails to appear in court or violates the bond conditions, the judge may revoke the bond and order the defendant to pay the amount listed on the bond.

A **cash bond** requires the defendant, or someone acting on the defendant's behalf, to pay money before the defendant can be released from jail.

If the defendant appears for court as required and follows the court's orders, the money may be returned according to Wisconsin law. If the defendant fails to appear or violates certain court orders, some or all of the money may be forfeited.

What Is Bail?

Bail is the amount of money the court may require before a defendant is released from jail.

Many people use the words **bond** and **bail** as if they mean the same thing, but they are different.

Bond	Bail
The court's order allowing release from jail	Money the court may require before release.
Includes the rules the defendant must follow.	Does not include the rules of release.
Every defendant released from jail has bond conditions.	Not every defendant is required to pay bail.

Example

A defendant may be released on a \$5,000 signature bond, which means no money is paid unless the defendant violates the bond or fails to appear in court.

Another defendant may be released on a \$5,000 cash bond, which means the money must be paid before the defendant is released.

In both situations, the defendant must obey all bond conditions ordered by the judge.

Can Bond Conditions Be Changed?

Yes. A judge may change bond conditions if new information becomes available or if circumstances change.

Only a judge can change bond conditions.

What If I Want the Bond Conditions Changed?

If you have concerns about the defendant's bond conditions, contact the Wood County Victim/Witness Services Department as soon as possible.

Victim/Witness staff can:

- Listen to your concerns.
- Explain the court process.
- Discuss your safety concerns.
- Share your concerns with the prosecutor.

If appropriate, the prosecutor may ask the judge to review the bond conditions.

Examples of changes that may be requested include:

- Adding a no-contact order.
- Changing an existing no-contact order.
- Requesting that the defendant stay away from your home, workplace, or school.
- Reporting new safety concerns that have developed since the bond was set.

The judge will consider many factors before deciding whether to change the bond conditions.

What Should I Do If the Defendant Violates the Bond Conditions?

If you believe the defendant has violated the bond conditions:

1. **Call 911 immediately** if you are in danger or there is an emergency.
2. Report the violation to your local law enforcement agency.
3. Contact the Wood County Victim/Witness Services Department.

Be prepared to provide as much information as possible, including:

- What happened.
 - When it happened.
 - Where it happened.
 - Whether anyone witnessed the violation.
 - Any evidence you may have, such as text messages, voicemails, emails, or photographs.
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If you have questions about the defendant's release, believe the bond conditions should be changed, or are concerned about your safety, contact the Wood County Victim/Witness Services Department. We are here to answer your questions, explain the court process, and make sure your concerns are shared with the prosecutor.