§ 190.25 Grand jury; proceedings and operation in general.

1. Proceedings of a grand jury are not valid unless at least sixteen of its members are present. The finding of an indictment, a direction to file a prosecutor's information, a decision to submit a grand jury report and every other affirmative official action or decision requires the concurrence of at least twelve members thereof.

2. The foreman or any other grand juror may administer an oath to any witness appearing before the grand jury.

3. Except as provided in subdivision three-a of this section, during the deliberations and voting of a grand jury, only the grand jurors may be present in the grand jury room. During its other proceedings, the following persons, in addition to witnesses, may, as the occasion requires, also be present:

(a) The district attorney;

(b) A clerk or other public servant authorized to assist the grand jury in the administrative conduct of its proceedings;

(c) A stenographer authorized to record the proceedings of the grand jury;

(d) An interpreter. Upon request of the grand jury, the prosecutor must provide an interpreter to interpret the testimony of any witness who does not speak the English language well enough to be readily understood. Such interpreter must, if he has not previously taken the constitutional oath of office, first take an oath before the grand jury that he will faithfully interpret the testimony of the witness and that he will keep secret all matters before such grand jury within his knowledge;

(e) A public servant holding a witness in custody. When a person held in official custody is a witness before a grand jury, a public servant assigned to guard him during his grand jury appearance may accompany him in the grand jury room. Such public servant must, if he has not previously taken the constitutional oath of office, first take an oath before the grand jury that he will keep secret all matters before it within his knowledge.

(f) An attorney representing a witness pursuant to section 190.52 of

this chapter while that witness is present.

(g) An operator, as that term is defined in section 190.32 of this chapter, while the videotaped examination of either a special witness or a child witness is being played.

(h) A social worker, rape crisis counselor, psychologist or other professional providing emotional support to a child witness twelve years old or younger, or a social worker or informal caregiver, as provided in subdivision two of section two hundred six of the elder law, for a vulnerable elderly person as provided in subdivision three of section 260.31 of the penal law, who is called to give evidence in a grand jury proceeding concerning a crime defined in article one hundred twenty-one, article one hundred thirty, article two hundred sixty, section 120.10, 125.10, 125.15, 125.20, 125.25, 125.26, 125.27, 255.25, 255.26 or 255.27 of the penal law provided that the district attorney consents. Such support person shall not provide the witness with an answer to any question or otherwise participate in such proceeding and shall first take an oath before the grand jury that he or she will keep secret all matters before such grand jury within his or her knowledge.

3-a. Upon the request of a deaf or hearing-impaired grand juror, the prosecutor shall provide a sign language interpreter for such juror. Such interpreter shall be present during all proceedings of the grand jury which the deaf or hearing-impaired grand juror attends, including deliberation and voting. The interpreter shall, if he or she has not previously taken the constitutional oath of office, first take an oath before the grand jury that he or she will faithfully interpret the testimony of the witnesses and the statements of the prosecutor, judge and grand jurors; keep secret all matters before such grand jury within his or her knowledge; and not seek to influence the deliberations and voting of such grand jury.

4. (a) Grand jury proceedings are secret, and no grand juror, or other person specified in subdivision three of this section or section 215.70 of the penal law, may, except in the lawful discharge of his duties or upon written order of the court, disclose the nature or substance of any grand jury testimony, evidence, or any decision, result or other matter attending a grand jury proceeding. For the purpose of assisting the

grand jury in conducting its investigation, evidence obtained by a grand jury may be independently examined by the district attorney, members of his staff, police officers specifically assigned to the investigation, and such other persons as the court may specifically authorize. Such evidence may not be disclosed to other persons without a court order. Nothing contained herein shall prohibit a witness from disclosing his own testimony.

(b) When a district attorney obtains evidence during a grand jury proceeding which provides reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or maltreated, as those terms are defined by section ten hundred twelve of the family court act, he must apply to the court supervising the grand jury for an order permitting disclosure of such evidence to the state central register of child abuse and maltreatment. A district attorney need not apply to the court for such order if he has previously made or caused a report to be made to the state central register of child abuse and maltreatment pursuant to section four hundred thirteen of the social services law and the evidence obtained during the grand jury proceeding, or substantially similar information, was included in such report. The district attorney's application to the court shall be made ex parte and in camera. The court must grant the application and permit the district attorney to disclose the evidence to the state central register of child abuse and maltreatment unless the court finds that such disclosure would jeopardize the life or safety of any person or interfere with a continuing grand jury proceeding.

5. The grand jury is the exclusive judge of the facts with respect to any matter before it.

6. The legal advisors of the grand jury are the court and the district attorney, and the grand jury may not seek or receive legal advice from any other source. Where necessary or appropriate, the court or the district attorney, or both, must instruct the grand jury concerning the law with respect to its duties or any matter before it, and such instructions must be recorded in the minutes.