CHAPTER 944
CRIMES AGAINST SEXUAL MORALITY

SUBCHAPTER I
LEGISLATIVE INTENT

944.01 Intent. The state recognizes that it has a duty to encourage high moral standards. Although the state does not regulate the private sexual activity of consenting adults, the state does not condone or encourage any form of sexual conduct outside the institution of marriage. Marriage is the foundation of family and society. Its stability is basic to morality and civilization, and of vital interest to society and this state.

History: 1983 a. 17.

SUBCHAPTER II
SEXUAL CRIMES WHICH AFFECT THE FAMILY

944.05 Bigamy. (1) Whoever does any of the following is guilty of a Class I felony:
(a) Contracts a marriage in this state with knowledge that his or her prior marriage is not dissolved; or
(b) Contracts a marriage in this state with knowledge that the prior marriage of the person he or she marries is not dissolved; or
(c) Cohabits in this state with a person whom he or she married outside this state with knowledge that his or her own prior marriage had not been dissolved or with knowledge that the prior marriage of the person he or she married had not been dissolved.

(2) In this section “cohabit” means to live together under the representation or appearance of being married.


944.06 Incest. Whoever marries or has nonmarital sexual intercourse, as defined in s. 948.01 (6), with a person he or she knows is a blood relative and such relative is in fact related in a degree within which the marriage of the parties is prohibited by the law of this state is guilty of a Class F felony.

History: 1977 c. 173; 2001 a. 109; 2009 a. 13. Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558 (2003), did not announce a fundamental right of adults to engage in all forms of private consensual sexual conduct. There was no clearly established federal law in 2001 that supported defendant’s claim that he had a fundamental right to engage in incest free from government proscription. Muth v. Frank, 412 F.3d 808 (2005).

SUBCHAPTER III
FORNICATION; ADULTERY; GRATIFICATION

944.15 Public fornication. (1) In this section, “in public” means in a place where or in a manner such that the person knows or has reason to know that his or her conduct is observable by or in the presence of persons other than the person with whom he or she is having sexual intercourse.

(2) Whoever has sexual intercourse in public is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.


944.16 Adultery. Whoever does either of the following is guilty of a Class I felony:
(1) A married person who has sexual intercourse with a person not the married person’s spouse; or
(2) A person who has sexual intercourse with a person who is married to another.


944.17 Sexual gratification. (1) In this section, “in public” means in a place where or in a manner such that the person knows or has reason to know that his or her conduct is observable by or in the presence of persons other than the person with whom he or she is having sexual gratification.

(2) Whoever commits an act of sexual gratification in public involving the sex organ of one person and the mouth or anus of another is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

(3) Subsection (2) does not apply to a mother’s breast-feeding of her child.


944.18 Bestiality. (1) DEFINITIONS. In this section:
(a) “Animal” means any creature, either alive or dead, except a human being.
(b) “Obscene material” has the meaning given in s. 944.21 (2) (c).
(c) “Photograph or film” means the making of a photograph, motion picture film, video tape, digital image, or any other recording.
(d) “Sexual contact” means any of the following types of contact that is not an accepted veterinary medical practice, an accepted animal husbandry practice that provides care for animals, an accepted practice related to the insemination of animals.

Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558 (2003), did not announce a fundamental right of adults to engage in all forms of private consensual sexual conduct. There was no clearly established federal law in 2001 that supported defendant’s claim that he had a fundamental right to engage in incest free from government proscription. Muth v. Frank, 412 F.3d 808 (2005).
for the purpose of procreation, or an accepted practice related to conformation judging:

1. An act between a person and an animal involving physical contact between the sex organ, genitals, or anus of one and the mouth, sex organ, genitals, or anus of the other.

2. Any touching or fondling by a person, either directly or through clothing, of the sex organ, genitals, or anus of an animal or any insertion, however slight, of any part of a person's body or any object into the vaginal or anal opening of an animal.

3. Any insertion, however slight, of any part of an animal's body into the vaginal or anal opening of a person.

(2) PROHIBITED CONDUCT. No person may knowingly do any of the following:

(a) Engage in sexual contact with an animal.

(b) Advertise, offer, accept an offer, sell, transfer, purchase, or otherwise obtain an animal with the intent that it be used for sexual contact in this state.

(c) Organize, promote, conduct, or participate as an observer of an act involving sexual contact with an animal.

(d) Permit sexual contact with an animal to be conducted on any premises under his or her ownership or control.

(e) Photograph or film obscene material depicting a person engaged in sexual contact with an animal.

(f) Distribute, sell, publish, or transmit obscene material depicting a person engaged in sexual contact with an animal.

(g) Possess with the intent to distribute, sell, publish, or transmit obscene material depicting a person engaged in sexual contact with an animal.

(h) Force, coerce, entice, or encourage a child who has not attained the age of 13 years to engage in sexual contact with an animal.

(i) Engage in sexual contact with an animal in the presence of a child who has not attained the age of 13 years.

(j) Force, coerce, entice, or encourage a child who has attained the age of 13 years but who has not attained the age of 18 years to engage in sexual contact with an animal.

(k) Engage in sexual contact with an animal in the presence of a child who has attained the age of 13 years but who has not attained the age of 18 years.

(3) PENALTIES. (a) Any person who violates sub. (2) (a) to (g) is guilty of a Class H felony for the first violation and is guilty of a Class F felony for a 2nd or subsequent violation or if the act results in bodily harm to or the death of an animal. Any person who violates sub. (2) (h) or (i) is guilty of a Class F felony for the first violation and is guilty of a Class D felony for a 2nd or subsequent violation. Any person who violates sub. (2) (j) or (k) is guilty of a Class G felony for the first violation and is guilty of a Class E felony for a 2nd or subsequent violation.

(c) If a person has been convicted under sub. (2), the sentencing court shall order, in addition to any other applicable penalties, all of the following:

1. That the person may not own, possess, reside with, or exercise control over any animal or engage in any occupation, whether paid or unpaid, at any place where animals are kept or cared for, for not less than 5 years or more than 15 years. In computing the time period, time which the person spent in actual confinement serving a criminal sentence shall be excluded.

2. That the person shall submit to a psychological assessment and participate in appropriate counseling at the person's expense.

3. That the person shall pay restitution to a person, including any local humane officer or society or county or municipal pound or a law enforcement officer or conservation warden or his or her designee, for any pecuniary loss suffered by the person as a result of the crime. This requirement applies regardless of whether the person is placed on probation under s. 973.09. If restitution is ordered, the court shall consider the financial resources and future ability of the person to pay and shall determine the method of payment. Upon application of an interested party, the court shall schedule and hold an evidentiary hearing to determine the value of any pecuniary loss, as defined in s. 951.18 (4) (a) 1., under this subdivision.

(4) SEVERABILITY. The provisions of this section are severable, as provided in s. 990.001 (11).


SUBCHAPTER IV

OBSCENITY

944.20 Lewd and lascivious behavior. (1) Whoever does any of the following is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor:

(a) Commits an indecent act of sexual gratification with another with knowledge that they are in the presence of others; or

(b) Publicly and indecently exposes genitals or pubic area.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a mother's breast-feeding of her child.


“Publicly” is susceptible to a construction that will avoid the question of constitutional overbreadth, by limiting the application of the statute to constitutionally permissible goals of protecting children from exposure to obscenity and preventing assaults on the sensibilities of unwilling adults in public. Reichenberger v. Warren, 319 F. Supp. 1237 (1970).

944.21 Obscene material or performance. (1) The legislature intends that the authority to prosecute violations of this section shall be used primarily to combat the obscenity industry and shall never be used for harassment or censorship purposes against materials or performances having serious artistic, literary, political, educational or scientific value. The legislature further intends that the enforcement of this section shall be consistent with the first amendment to the U.S. constitution, article I, section 3, of the Wisconsin constitution and the compelling state interest in protecting the free flow of ideas.

(2) In this section:

(a) “Community” means this state.

(b) “Internal revenue code” has the meaning specified in s. 71.01 (6).

(c) “Obscene material” means a writing, picture, film, or other recording that:

1. The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find appeals to the prurient interest if taken as a whole;

2. Under contemporary community standards, describes or shows sexual conduct in a patently offensive way; and

3. Lacks serious literary, artistic, political, educational or scientific value, if taken as a whole.

(d) “Obscene performance” means a live exhibition before an audience which:

1. The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find appeals to the prurient interest if taken as a whole;

2. Under contemporary community standards, describes or shows sexual conduct in a patently offensive way; and

3. Lacks serious literary, artistic, political, educational or scientific value, if taken as a whole.

(dm) “Recording” has the meaning given in s. 948.01 (3r).

(e) “Sexual conduct” means the commission of any of the following: sexual intercourse, sodomy, bestiality, necrophilia, human excretion, masturbation, sadism, masochism, fellatio, cunnilingus or lewd exhibition of human genitals.

(f) “Wholesale transfer or distribution of obscene material” means any transfer for a valuable consideration of obscene material for purposes of resale or commercial distribution; or any distribution of obscene material for commercial exhibition. “Wholesale transfer or distribution of obscene material” does not require
3

Updated 21–22 Wis. Stats.

CRIMES AGAINST SEXUAL MORALITY 944.30

b. is exempt from taxation under section 501 (c) (3) of the internal revenue code.

d. Any institution of higher education that is accredited, as described in s. 39.30 (1) (d), and is exempt from taxation under section 501 (c) (3) of the internal revenue code.

e. A library that receives funding from any unit of government.

9) In determining whether material is obscene under sub. (2) (c) 1. and 3., a judge or jury shall examine individual pictures, recordings of images, or passages in the context of the work in which they appear.

10) The provisions of this section, including the provisions of sub. (8), are severable, as provided in s. 990.001 (11).

NOTE: The preceding annotations relate to this section as it existed prior to its treatment by 1987 Wis. Act. 416.

This section is not unconstitutionally overbroad or vague. States are not prevented from deviating from the Miller v. California, 413 U.S. 15, language regulating obscenity. Jury instructions that use synonymous or explanatory terms not used in Miller are not improper. County of Kenosha v. C & S. Management, Inc. 223 Wis. 2d 373, 588 N.W.2d 236 (1999), 97–0642.

A telephone survey regarding community standards is irrelevant. A relevant survey must address whether the material at issue depicts acts in a patently offensive manner and appeals to the prurient interest. County of Kenosha v. C. & S. Management, Inc. 223 Wis. 2d 373, 588 N.W.2d 236 (1999), 97–0642.


440.52 (1) (e) 6.

440.52 (1) (e) 7.

440.52 (1) (e) 8.

Updated 2021–22 Wisconsin Statutes updated through 2023 Wis. Act 39 and through all Supreme Court and Controlled Substances Board Orders filed before and in effect on December 13, 2023. Published and certified under s. 35.18. Changes effective after December 13, 2023, are designated by NOTES. (Published 12–13–23)
Section 944.32, 1985 stats., prohibiting solicitation of prostitutes, does not violate right of free speech. Shillcutt v. State, 74 Wis. 2d 642, 247 N.W.2d 694 (1976).

This section is not unconstitutionally vague or overbroad and its penalty is not disproportionate. State v. Johnson, 108 Wis. 2d 703, 324 N.W.2d 447 (Ct. App. 1982).

Monetary gain is not an element of the crime. State v. Huff, 123 Wis. 2d 397, 367 N.W.2d 226 (Ct. App. 1985).

944.33 Pandering. Whoever does any of the following is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor:

(1) Solicits another to have nonmarital sexual intercourse or to commit an act of sexual gratification, in public or in private, involving the sex organ of one person and the mouth or anus of another, masturbation or sexual contact with a person the solicitor knows is a prostitute; or

(2) With intent to facilitate another in having nonmarital intercourse or committing an act of sexual gratification, in public or in private, involving the sex organ of one person and the mouth or anus of another, masturbation or sexual contact with a prostitute, directs or transports the person to a prostitute or directs or transports a prostitute to the person.


944.34 Keeping place of prostitution. Whoever intentionally does any of the following is guilty of a Class H felony:

(1) Keeps a place of prostitution; or

(2) Grants the use or allows the continued use of a place as a place of prostitution.


A conviction under sub. (2) requires proof that the defendant has authority to exclude those engaging in prostitution from the use of the place for prohibited acts. Shillcutt v. State, 74 Wis. 2d 642, 247 N.W.2d 694 (1976).

Under sub. (2), “grants the use” requires the prosecution to prove a single affirmative approval of the use of the premises as a place of prostitution, while “allows the continued use of” requires proof of intentional but passive acquiescence or toleration of the use on more than one occasion.

Johnson v. State, 76 Wis. 2d 672, 251 N.W.2d 834 (1977).

944.36 Solicitation of drinks prohibited. Any licensee, permittee or bartender of a retail alcohol beverage establishment covered by a license or permit issued under ch. 125 who permits an entertainer or employee to solicit a drink of any alcohol beverage, as defined in s. 125.02 (1), or any other drink from a customer on the premises, or any entertainer or employee who solicits such drinks from any customer, is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

History: 1975 c. 39 s. 675x; 1975 c. 199; Stats. 1975 s. 944.36; 1977 c. 173; 1981 c. 79.

Legislative Council Note, 1981: The amendment to s. 944.36 reflects the combining of s. 66.054 and ch. 176 into one chapter, ch. 125, and the definition of “alcohol beverage” in that chapter. [Bill 300–A]