

- **Business Names**

- **Definition:** names for businesses and internet domain names.

- **Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions**

- www.wdfi.org/corporations

- Under the Names heading, this Web page provides information on how to search for business name availability and registration within the state of Wisconsin.

- Is the Name You Want for Your Business Being Used?**

- When selecting a name for your business, do your homework to avoid infringing on names filed by other businesses or being used by another entity as a trademark or trade name. Where should you look to see if a name is already being used?

- Do an on-line search of the **Corporate Registration Information System (CRIS)** at <http://www.wdfi.org/corporations/> or call the Department of Financial Institutions at 608-261-9555 to find out if that name is already in use or has been reserved. While this database is continually updated, CRIS reflects only the names of entities on record with DFI (Corporations, LLC, LLP, etc.). Do not assume you have use of the name until you receive an email confirmation from DFI.
- You should also check with the Register of Deeds in your county to make sure no one else is using the business name you want. To register your business name, submit a “Registration of Firm Name” application with the Register of Deeds Office in the county where your business will be headquartered.
- You can also contact Secretary of State at 608-266-5653 to see if a name is already in use. A sole proprietor may choose to file a trade-name registration with the Secretary of State.
- Look through the phone book or online directory such as www.superpages.com.
- Search the Internet for name registrations through ICANN Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers at www.icann.org or 310-823-9358, or visit one of the many accredited registrars of domain names.

Although the optional registrations through Secretary of State and the Register of Deeds create a public record of your use of a business name, the registrations in themselves do not establish or reserve exclusive rights to use a name.

The Build Your Business site has a section on selecting your business name at www.wisconsin.gov/state/byb/name.html.

What is DBA-“Doing Business As?”

“Doing Business As” or DBA is used when a person or a company operates their business using a business name other than their real, actual name. In Wisconsin, DBA’s use the “Registration of Firm Names” form from the Register of Deeds.

For example, John Smith may wish to start a new business called “Midwest Plumbing”. His business name is obviously not his real name, so a DBA registration is required. For a person wanting to file a DBA, as a Sole Proprietorship, if the name of that person (John Smith for our example) is not used in any way as part of the company name, then a “Registration of Firm Name” form will be necessary. But if John Smith wishes to do business as “John Smith Plumbing,” then a DBA is not required because the person’s real name is identifiable within the business name.