



Open Records Requests

Procedures to obtain information

1. Fill out a Texas Public Information Act Request Form or otherwise submit a request by mail, fax, email or in-person.
2. Include enough description and detail about the information requested to enable the governmental body to accurately identify and locate the information requested.
3. Cooperate with the governmental body's reasonable efforts to clarify the type or amount of information requested.

Information to be released

You may review it promptly, and if it cannot be produced within ten (10) working days the public information officer will notify you in writing of the reasonable date and time when it will be available.

Keep all appointments to inspect records and to pick up copies. Failure to keep appointments may result in losing the opportunity to inspect the information at the time requested.

Cost of Records

You must respond to any written estimate of charges within ten (10) days of the date the governmental body sent it or the request is considered automatically withdrawn.

You may ask the governmental body to determine whether providing the information primarily benefits the general public, resulting in a waiver or reduction of charges.

Make a timely payment for all mutually agreed charges. A governmental body can demand payment of overdue balances exceeding \$100 before processing additional requests from you.

Information that may be withheld due to an exception

By the tenth (10th) business day after a governmental body receives your written request, a governmental body must:

- Request an Attorney General opinion and state which exceptions apply;
- Notify the requester(s) of the referral to the Attorney General; and
- Notify third parties if the request involves their proprietary information

Failure to request an Attorney General opinion and notify the requester within 10 business days will result in a presumption that the information is open unless there is a compelling reason to withhold it.

Requester(s) may send a letter to the Attorney General arguing for release, and may review arguments made by the governmental body. If the arguments disclose the requested information, the requester(s) may obtain a redacted copy.

The Attorney General must issue a decision no later than the 45th working day from the day after the attorney general received the request for a decision. The attorney general may request an additional 10 working day extension.

Governmental bodies may not ask the Attorney General to "reconsider" an opinion.

Rights of Requester(s)

You have the right to:

Prompt access to information that is not confidential or otherwise protected;

Receive treatment equal to all other requester(s), including accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements;

Receive certain kinds of information without exceptions, like the voting record of public officials, and other information;

Receive a written itemized statement of estimated charges, when charges will exceed \$40, in advance of work being started and opportunity to modify the request in response to the itemized statement;

Choose whether to inspect the requested information (most often at no charge), receive copies of the information or both;

A waiver or reduction of charges if the governmental body determines that access to the information primarily benefits the general public;

Receive a copy of the communication from the governmental body asking the Office of the Attorney General for a ruling on whether the information can be withheld under one of the accepted exceptions, or if the communication discloses the requested information, a redacted copy;

Lodge a written complaint about overcharges for public information with the Cost Rules Administration, Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Responsibilities of Governmental Bodies

All governmental bodies responding to information requests have the responsibility to:

Establish reasonable procedures for inspecting or copying public information and inform requester(s) of these procedures;

Treat all requests uniformly and shall give to the requester all reasonable comfort and facility, including accommodation in accordance with ADA requirements;

Be informed about open records laws and educate employees on the requirements of those laws;

Inform requester(s) of the estimated charges greater than \$40 and any changes in the estimates above 20 percent of the original estimate, and confirm that the requester accepts the charges, or has amended the request, in writing before finalizing the request;

Inform the requester(s) if the information cannot be provided promptly and set a date and time to provide it within a reasonable time;

Request a ruling from the Office of the Attorney General regarding any information the governmental body wishes to withhold, and send a copy of the request for ruling, or a redacted copy, to the requester(s);

Segregate public information from information that may be withheld and provide that public information promptly;

Make a good faith attempt to inform third parties when their proprietary information is being requested from the governmental body;

Respond in writing to all written communications from the General Services Commission regarding charges for the information. Respond to the Office of the Attorney General regarding complaints about violations of the Act.

Complaints regarding failure to release public information

Contact the Office of the Attorney General, Open Records Hotline, at (512) 478-6736 (512) 478-6736 or toll-free at 1 (877) 673-6839. FREE.

For complaints regarding overcharges, please contact the Cost Rules Administration, Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.