



How To Submit A Public Records Request (FOIA Request)

Want to learn more about what is being taught or going on in your child's school?

Under your state's open records laws, and federally under the Freedom of Information Act, parents have the right to request documents, expenditure reports, email correspondence, and other information from your child's school and school district.

Examples of public school records available include (but are not limited to):

- Emails from the email addresses of public-school officials (including principals, school board members, teachers, staff and anyone with a school email address)
- Contracts, curriculum, trainings, videos, text messages and other records that provide valuable information about events, classes and other issues that may cause you concern.

Filing a public records request/FOIA

- **Search for existing resources:** Search the district website for any existing information that is publicly available. You can also ask a teacher or administrator for the information first, especially if your request pertains to curriculum and instructional materials. They're required to provide parents with curriculum when requested.
- **Know the process:** Each school district has a slightly different process and form. Visit our district link file to find a link to your district's process. If you're requesting something like a list of textbooks or something specific to a particular school, you'll want to make the request at the school level. If you're requesting something like staff training or contracts, you'll probably want to make a request at the school district level.
- **Be specific:** You will want to be very specific in your ask to ensure you don't get more information than you need.
 - School district budgets for the last two years
 - Grant applications or awards for the last four years
 - Training materials used for teacher trainings during the 2021-2022 school year
 - Mrs. Jones's outgoing and incoming emails for April 22-23, 2022
 - Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum materials for the 2019-2020 school year
- **Fees:** Some districts may charge a fee depending on the size of the request. This is to cover the cost of staff time to fulfill a request or to cover copying costs if physical copies

were requested. You can ask if there is a fee when making your request, or for them to notify if the fee will be above a certain amount.

- **Get proof of receipt:** If you send by email (which is most common), request a read receipt, or you can drop it off at the school or district office in person, or send via certified mail.
- **Follow up:** It may take a few days or weeks to receive what you request (Note that a two week time frame is standard in some areas). Follow up with a phone call to the district periodically for a status update.

Items to include in your public records request (if not using district provided form):

Your Name

Email Address

Phone Number

Date of Submission

Date to Receive Information [two weeks out]

Sample Request

Re: Public Records Request

Pursuant to the [insert your state name] Public Records Act, I request copies of the following public records:

[Indicate all the records you are requesting and the TIME FRAME – from ____ to ____ - that you are requesting them for. For example, all communications (including e-mails and text messages), since date to date concerning any [enter specifics or keywords and list all the records you are requesting], etc.

Then add this information to your letter:

Pursuant to the Public Records Act, I request that responsive records be produced in an electronic medium (specifically, a pdf-file) to the extent such records may reasonably be duplicated in that medium. The records in the electronic medium may be sent to me at the e-mail address in the header of this letter.

Please let me know if there is any cost to getting a copy of these records in advance. Send me the \$ per item to the e-mail listed above.

I thank you, in advance, for your attention in providing the prompt production of the requested records. Naturally, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the telephone number above.

Sincerely,

[your name and signature]

[CC anyone you would like]