



# MIKE DEWINE

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL

## What You Need to Know About The Ohio Attorney General's Public Records Policy

Our Public Records Policy guides us in helping the public to access Office records they are entitled to by law. The policy summarized below appears in full in the Attorney General's Policies and Procedures Manual. A copy of the most recent edition of the Attorney General's Ohio Sunshine Laws manual is available on the Attorney General's website [www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook).

### Defining and Organizing Public Records

All records that document the work of the Ohio Attorney General's Office are public unless they are exempt from disclosure under law. This applies to all business records, whether they exist on paper, electronically (e.g., e-mail correspondence), or any other media.

### Public Access to Records

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours. Records must be made available for inspection promptly and copies must be made available within a reasonable period of time.

### Processing Public Records Requests

It is the goal of the Attorney General's Office that requests for public records should be acknowledged in writing or, if feasible, satisfied within three business days following the office's receipt of the request.

No "official" language is required to make a request for public records, and the request does not need to be in writing. Requesters do not have to provide their identity, nor must they indicate how they intend to use the requested records. Our general policy is to not request this information. However, the requester must identify the records they seek with sufficient clarity to allow the office to identify and retrieve the records. If a request is impermissibly ambiguous or overly broad, the office may deny the request but will contact the requester for clarification, and should assist the requester in revising the request by explaining how the office's records are organized and accessed.

### Electronic Records

Electronic records are to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats. Communications such as e-mail, text messages, and instant messages may be public records if their content documents the business of the Office of the Attorney General.

Records transmitted to or from private e-mail accounts to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of this office are required to retain them in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

### Denial or Redaction of Records

If the office withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, it must provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s). If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted and the rest must be released. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, the office shall notify the requestor of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

### Copying and Mailing Charges

There is no charge to inspect public records. Copies of records are available at actual cost, excluding labor. The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page. The charge for electronic files downloaded to a compact disc is \$1 per disc. The actual cost of postage, mailing supplies, or other delivery costs may be charged. There is no charge for emailed documents. It is permissible to require payment of all costs in advance of delivery.

The requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium in which the public record is kept, or upon any other medium on which this office determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the office's normal operations.

### Managing Records

The Attorney General's Office records are subject to records retention schedules, which are available at <http://apps.das.ohio.gov/rims/Search/PublicSearch.asp>.