



# 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 properly handling public records requests. It also lets the public know how we can help them access Office records they are entitled to by law. The policy summarized below appears in full on the Attorney General's website —[www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov) — and in the Ohio Attorney General's Policies and Procedures Manual.

### **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 by law. All public records must be organized and maintained so they can be made available in response to public records requests. This applies to all public records, whether they exist on paper, electronically (e.g., business e-mail correspondence), or on any other media.

### **Public Access to Records**

Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Records must be provided promptly for inspection and copies must be made available within a reasonable period of time.

### **Processing Public Records Requests**

All requests for public records must either be satisfied or acknowledged in writing upon receipt by the Office. If a request is made by a member of the media, please notify the Media Relations staff immediately.

No "official" language is required to make a public records request. It does not need to be in writing. Requesters do not have to provide their identity, nor must they indicate how they will use the requested public record. Our general policy is to not request this information.

Requesters must identify the records they seek clearly enough to allow the Office to identify and retrieve the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the AGO employee shall contact the requester for clarification and assist in refining the request by explaining how the office's records are organized and kept.

### **Electronic Records**

Electronic records are to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats. Communications, such as text messages, instant messages, and e-mails may be public records if their content documents the business of the Office of the Ohio Attorney General. Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of this Office are required to copy their e-mails that relate to public business to their business e-mail accounts and retain them in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

### **Denying or Redacting Public Records**

Any denial of public records requested must be in writing if the original request was in writing and must include an explanation and legal authority. Redactions must be made plainly visible by using black marker or other obvious marking.

### **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 \$ .05 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 e-mailed documents. It is permissible to require advance payments.

A requester may choose to receive copies either on paper, on the same medium in which the requested records are kept, or on any other medium on which the office determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the office's normal operations.