



[OPM.gov](https://www.opm.gov) / [Information Management](#) / Freedom of Information Act

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT OVERVIEW

To better manage current resource limitations, all FOIA requests to OPM may now be submitted online. Please note that we are experiencing prolonged delays in the acknowledgment and processing of FOIA requests as we are working through a backlog.

Submit a FOIA Request Online

[Public Access Link \(PAL\)](#) - You can access the OPM PAL web portal (OPM Public Access Link (PAL)) that allows you to create, submit, and track the status of your FOIA request(s). Prior to use, you must register using Login.gov.

[National FOIA Portal](#) - FOIA.gov serves as the government's comprehensive FOIA website for all information on the FOIA. Among many other features, FOIA.gov provides a central resource for the public to understand the FOIA, to locate records that are already available online, and to make a request for information that is not yet publicly available. From the FOIA.GOV main screen, click "Create a Request" then search for "Office of Personnel Management" to get started. Clicking on the blue "Continue the FOIA request Process" button will lead you to the online form.

Tips and Reminders for Making a FOIA Request

1. Your FOIA request should describe the records sought in sufficient detail to enable the OPM office to locate the records with a reasonable amount of effort. Whenever possible, you should include specific information about each record sought, such as the date, number, title or name, author, recipient, and subject matter of the record.
2. The FOIA does not require OPM to do research for you, to analyze data, to answer written questions, or to create records in response to a request.
3. You may make a FOIA request for any OPM agency records; however, the records may be protected by one or more of the FOIA exemptions or exclusions.
4. When submitting a FOIA request, to the extent feasible, please provide OPM an email address where you can be reached, for ease of communication.
5. Refer to the **Contacts** tab for information on requesting background investigation, personnel, and benefits records.

Contact Information

You may contact the FOIA Requester Service Center at:

Email

foia@opm.gov

Phone

202-606-3642

Related Information

- [Records Management](#)
- [Ethics](#)

APPEALS

When OPM denies records or a fee waiver, you may file an appeal in writing to:

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of the General Counsel
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415-1300

If the denial is for information maintained by the Office of General Counsel, you may file an appeal to:

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Deputy Director
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415-0001

An appeal should include a copy of the initial request, a copy of the letter denying the request, and a statement explaining why you disagree with OPM's decision. You should write "Freedom of Information Act Appeal" on the front of the envelope and on the first page of the appeal letter.

Judicial Review

If your appeal has been decided and you still believe that OPM has not handled your FOIA request in accordance with the law, you may seek judicial review. Judicial review is a litigation process in which you challenge OPM's action in a lawsuit filed in Federal Court. You may file the suit in a Federal District Court in any of the following places: (1) where you reside; (2) where you have your principal place of business; (3) in the District of Columbia; or (4) where the records are located.

REFERENCE GUIDES

Introduction

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Title 5 of the United States Code, section 552, gives you the right to request access to federal agency records or information. All U.S. government agencies are required to disclose agency records to the public unless the records are protected by one or more of the FOIA's nine exemptions or three exclusions. The nine exemption categories that authorize government agencies to withhold information are:

1. classified information for national defense or foreign policy;
2. internal personnel rules and practices;
3. information that is exempt under other laws;
4. trade secrets and confidential business information;
5. inter-agency or intra-agency memoranda or letters that are protected by legal privileges;
6. personnel and medical files;
7. law enforcement records or information;
8. information concerning bank supervision; and
9. geological and geophysical information.

The three exclusions are rarely used and pertain to particularly sensitive law enforcement and national security matters.

Access to Certain Records Without a FOIA Request

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) makes certain records available without requiring a FOIA request. Such records include the agency's [Annual FOIA Report](#), and other documents which can be found in the agency's [Electronic Reading Room](#).

OPM's Freedom of Information Act Web page provides access to a list of [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) Contacts](#) within OPM and a link to the [U.S. Department of Justice FOIA and Privacy Act Web pages](#).

Time for Response

OPM has three methods for responding to your FOIA request. These methods, which have different response times, are regular processing, expedited processing, and extended response time processing.

Regular Processing

Once the appropriate OPM office receives your FOIA request, it will determine within twenty business days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) whether to disclose or deny the records sought.

Expedited Processing

You may be entitled to expedited processing of your FOIA request if you certify that you have a compelling need. A compelling need may be a threat to someone's life or physical safety. You may also have a compelling need if you are primarily engaged in disseminating information to the public and the information is urgently needed to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal Government activity. The request for expedited processing must include your reasons why your request should be expedited. You should also certify that your reasons are true and correct. The appropriate office will notify you of its decision to expedite your request within ten days after receiving your request. If the OPM office decides to expedite your request, it will be processed as soon as practicable. If the office denies your request for expedited processing, you have the right to submit an appeal, which OPM will handle expeditiously.

Extended Response Time Processing

Under the FOIA, OPM may extend the response time for an additional ten business days based upon unusual circumstances involved in the request, such as the volume of records sought.

Fees

An OPM office will furnish, without charge, reasonable quantities of material that it has available for free distribution to the public. Under the FOIA, OPM is permitted to charge certain fees for processing FOIA requests.

Fees may vary depending on the requester's category. Commercial requesters may be charged fees for searching, reviewing, and duplicating records. Noncommercial requesters, such as educational or scientific institutions and the news media, are only charged for the duplicating expenses, after the first 100 pages of copies. All other requesters who do not fall within either of these two categories are not charged for the review of the records, only for the search and duplication of the records. No charge is assessed for the first two hours of search time or for the first 100 pages of copies.

Fees less than \$25.00

If the total fee for searching, reviewing, and duplicating is less than \$25.00, no fee is assessed.

Fees between \$25.00 and \$250.00

If the estimated fees are between \$25.00 and \$250.00, OPM will not release the records unless you have agreed to pay all fees at the time of your request. If you do not include an acceptable agreement to pay the fees at the time of your request, OPM will promptly notify you of the estimated fees. Once you provide OPM with an agreement to pay all fees, OPM will release the records.

Fees over \$250.00

If the estimated fees exceed \$250.00, OPM may require you to pay the fees in advance.

Fee Waivers

OPM may waive fees if the disclosure of the requested information contributes significantly to public's understanding of the operation or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.

Initial Request Determination

Once the OPM office has processed your request and any fee issues have been resolved, the office will send you a written notice explaining its determination to disclose or deny records. If information is being withheld, OPM will specify the FOIA exemption that pertains to the denial. You will also be advised of your right to appeal any adverse determination. If pages of the requested information are withheld in their entirety, OPM will usually specify the number of pages being withheld or will make a reasonable effort to estimate the amount of withheld information.

REPORTS

The FOIA team is responsible for publishing the following reports:

Annual Freedom of Information Act Report: The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requires that each year agencies submit to the Attorney General a report covering the prior fiscal year that includes numerous details regarding the agency's administration of the FOIA. 5 U.S.C. § 552(e)(1) (2018).

Chief FOIA Officer Report: The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requires all agency Chief FOIA Officers to report to the Attorney General on their performance in implementing the FOIA. 5 U.S.C. § 552(j)(2)(D) (2018). The [Attorney General's FOIA Guidelines](#), accordingly, direct the Chief FOIA Officer to report each year to the Department of Justice on the steps taken by the agency to improve FOIA operations and facilitate information disclosure.

To view the latest versions of these reports visit our [Agency Reports page](#).

To view prior years of these reports visit our [Agency Archive page](#).

OPEN GOVERNMENT

This page is designed to meet the requirements of the Open Government Directive of December 2009. We hope you will find the information helpful and welcome your comments on our [Open Government](#) section.

Staffing, Organizational Structure, and Processing of FOIA Requests

In 2012, OPM hired the Chief Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer and increased team support by hiring an additional Government Information Specialist. The OPM FOIA Processing Team is now fully staffed. The OPM FOIA Processing Center, which is a separate office within the Office of the Chief Information Officer, has oversight responsibility to make sure that the program offices are fully compliant with the Freedom of Information Act and applicable FOIA guidelines, policies, procedures and case law. The FOIA team serves as a focal point for the intake and dissemination of FOIA requests to the appropriate program offices. This office also provides oversight on every FOIA request leaving the Agency for every program office, inclusive of the Records Operations Center (ROC). The Federal Investigative Services handles their own Privacy and FOIA requests without our review. On exceptional occasions, the OPM FOIA team will review a final response package on behalf of the Federal Investigative Services (FIS). We review all other final FOIA responses and responsive records to make sure that the application of FOIA exemptions and privileges have been consistent and appropriately with a “presumption of openness.” Standard operating procedures have been developed to make the team more effective in processing FOIA requests. In addition, each program office has a designated FOIA contact that is responsible for coordinating requests within their program office. Each program office also has a designated senior manager who provides oversight for the proper and timely handling of FOIA requests within each program. The FOIA staff at OPM totals more than 45 full- or part-time equivalent employees.

In order to keep track of incoming requests, a FOIA tracking system was implemented in 2007. The system provides a tracking number for each new FOIA, tracks the processing of each request, alerts record owners of requests for records, and conducts other useful search functions. OPM also uses email to correspond with and receive correspondence from FOIA requesters. The tracking system is routinely upgraded for greater efficiency in tracking requests and in the compilation of required reports such as the Annual FOIA Report. These revisions include the compilation of the quarterly report required by DOJ.

How We Need to Improve Our FOIA Processes

The existing tracking system has been evaluated to identify and evaluate potential areas for improvement. The system currently lacks the ability to generate acknowledgement letters. In the future, we would like to revise the present system to track FOIA processing fees, and allow for online submission of FOIA requests directly into the tracking system. In addition, we have also purchased software that will allow us to electronically review and redact responsive records.

OPM is taking several steps to improve timeliness in responding to FOIA requests. By carefully reviewing requests and assisting the responding program offices to clearly ascertain the records actually being sought at the beginning of the process, we have been able to increase our overall response efficiency. In addition, we have also been more interactive in making sure that the incoming requests are sent to the appropriate office which has the responsive records more efficiently than in the past.

What We Have Already Done

The Department of Justice recognized OPM for cleaning up its backlogged requests from 166 to 42 requests for FY 2012. We also cleaned up our 10 oldest FOIA requests for the second year in a row. OPM was one of only five Federal agencies recognized for significant improvements in FOIA processing and implementation in accordance with FOIA guidelines provided by Attorney General Holder. These key components are as follows:

1. Ensuring the presumption of openness,

2. Implementing effective systems for responding to requests,
3. Improving proactive disclosures,
4. Using advanced technology for FOIA administration, and
5. Reducing backlogs and improving timeliness overall.

OPM has also posted new material online open to the public. The website allows the general public to provide feedback on the content and presentation of the posted material. It has improved search capabilities, creating mobile applications and providing explanatory information as well.

ELECTRONIC READING

Freedom of Information Documents

The *Electronic Reading Room* contains documents specifically identified for inclusion by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as well as documents for which we have received multiple FOIA requests.

- [FOIA Log 10/1/2015 - 6/30-2016 Redacted\(PDF file\)](#)
- [FOIA Request 2014-03918 Santos FOIA Logs for 2 years\(PDF file\)](#)
- Enterprise Data Inventory (EDI): [machine-readable version](#) and [human-friendly version on Data.gov](#)

Final orders and Opinions

The Center for Information Services does not have any documents in this category.

Related Resources

- [Publications Database](#)
- [Federal Register Notices](#)
- [News Releases](#)
- [Speech Transcripts](#)
- [Retirement and Insurance Publications](#)
- [Statistical Data on the Federal Workforce](#)

CONTACTS

Background Investigations

On October 1, 2019, as authorized by Executive Order 13869, the mission, records, and personnel of the OPM, National Background Investigations Bureau, transferred to the Department of Defense, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA).

Accordingly, as of October 1, 2019, in order to obtain a copy of your background investigation, request an amendment to your records, or file a FOIA request related to background investigation data or records, please follow the instructions at DCSA's website: <https://www.dcsa.mil/contact/foia/foip/>.

If you have specific questions, you may contact the DCSA Freedom of Information and Privacy Office for Investigations at: (724) 794-5612, x7000.

Personnel Records

Our [OPF FAQ](#) provides information on how to obtain documents from Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), including SF 50s.

Benefits

For information relating to your benefits, including Survivor Benefits and Retirement and Health Benefits, and to request retirement estate valuations and copies of life insurance policies, please contact OPM's Retirement Operations Center (ROC), at:

Phone

724-794-2005

Mailing Address

Office of Personnel Management
Retirement Operations Center
Boyers, PA 16017-0045

Email Address

retire@opm.gov

FOIA Requester Service Center

Notice regarding correspondence submitted by postal mail:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OPM has adjusted its normal operations to balance the need of completing its mission-critical work while also adhering to the recommended social distancing for the safety of our staff. Accordingly, OPM's workforce has been authorized to operate in a maximized telework status. As a result, there are practical limitations on the ability of the FOIA staff to collect and to respond to "hard copy" mailed queries. Therefore, to the extent feasible, FOIA requests for agency records should be submitted by email to FOIA@opm.gov during this period to ensure a more timely response. Responses to FOIA requests and other correspondence received by postal mail may experience a delay. We apologize for this inconvenience and appreciate your understanding and patience.

Send your FOIA request directly to the OPM FOIA Requester Service Center at the following address:

Email

foia@opm.gov

Phone

202-606-3642

Mailing Address

U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, N.W.
OPIM/FOIA Room 5H35
Washington, D.C. 20415-7900*

* If you send your FOIA request by mail, please remember to write "Attention: FOIA Request" on the front of your request envelope.

FOIA Public Liaison

EmailCamille.Aponte-Rossini@opm.gov**Phone**

202-606-1153

Other Ways to Connect

CYBER SECURITY RECORDS

- [Annual Financial Report](#)
- [Annual Performance Report](#)
- [Colbert Exit Memo](#)
- [Congressional Budget Justification](#)

Cybersecurity Workforce Website

- [The National Cybersecurity Workforce Framework | Homeland Security](#)
- [Cybersecurity Workforce Development Resources | Homeland Security](#)
- [OPM Launches New Cyber Careers Website](#)

GAO reports related to OPM's information security

- [U.S. GAO - Information Security: OPM Has Improved Controls, but ...](#)
- [U.S. GAO - Federal Information Security: Weaknesses Continue to ...](#)
- [U.S. GAO - Identity Theft Services: Services Offer Some Benefits but ...](#)

Office of the Inspector General reports related to OPM's information security

- [OIG reports](#)
- [Semi Annual Reports](#)
- [CBIS 2017](#)
- [FACEs 2016\(PDF file\)](#)
- [FISMA 2017\(PDF file\)](#)
- [FISMA 2016\(PDF file\)](#)
- [FISMA 2015\(PDF file\)](#)
- [KeyPoint 2015\(PDF file\)](#)
- [Winvale – 2015\(PDF file\)](#)

OPM officials' statements: Testimony, statements and questions for the record

- [House Oversight Hearing – June 16, 2015](#)
- [House Oversight Hearing – June 24, 2015](#)
- [OPM Testimony](#)

Other OPM related information

- [DCOI Strategic Plan \(PDF file\)](#)
- [Decision in USIS case](#)
- [FITARA Implementation at OPM memo issued October 2016 \(PDF file\)](#)
- [OMB Exhibit 300s](#)
- [OPM cybersecurity website](#)
- [OPM materials on credit monitoring contract](#)