

Welcome to the website of the Digital Media Law Project. The DMLP was a project of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society from 2007 to 2014. Due to popular demand the Berkman Klein Center is keeping the website online, but **please note that the website and its contents are no longer being updated**. Please check any information you find here for accuracy and completeness.

January 20, 2025

- [Home](#)
- [Legal Guide](#)
- [Threats Database](#)
- [Research & Response](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [About](#)



Legal Resources for Digital Media



Access to Records from the Federal Government

If you are seeking records held by the United States government, you will need to become familiar with the [Freedom of Information Act](#) ("FOIA"), which was enacted in 1966. FOIA provides access to the public records of all departments, agencies, and offices of the Executive Branch of the federal government, including the Executive Office of the President. FOIA does not cover the sitting President, Congress, or the federal judiciary. For information on accessing information from these sources, see the [Access to Presidential Records](#), [Access to Congress](#), and [Access to Courts and Court Records](#) sections of this guide, respectively.

FOIA requires federal agencies to:

1. Provide access to their records and information, barring certain exceptions;
2. Suffer penalties for refusing to release covered information;
3. Appoint a FOI officer charged with responding to information requests; and
4. Publish agency regulations and policy statements, including their rules for handling FOIA information requests, in the [Federal Register](#).

The heart of FOIA is a "FOIA request": a written notice to the FOIA officer of a federal agency stating which records you are seeking. You should be forewarned, however, that although FOIA is a powerful tool for getting government information, it involves a rather complicated set of procedures. Before you file a request, you should spend some time reviewing each of the sections listed below. Click on one of the following sections to get started:

- [Who Can Request Records Under FOIA](#): Explains who is eligible to make a FOIA request.
- [What Records Are Available Under FOIA](#): Describes what kinds of records can be requested, which agencies are covered, and what records are exempted.
- [How to Request Records Under FOIA](#): Outlines the steps you should follow in making a request, and explains the procedures the government must follow in responding to a request.
- [What Are Your Remedies Under FOIA](#): Describes the courses of action you can take to enforce your rights if you believe that your request has been wrongly denied.

Subject Area:

- [Access to Gov't Information](#)
- [FOIA](#)

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- [Who Can Request Records Under FOIA](#)
 - [What Records Are Available Under FOIA](#)
 - [How to Request Records Under FOIA](#)
 - [What Are Your Remedies Under FOIA](#)

[◀ Access to Government Records](#)

[up](#)

[Who Can Request Records Under FOIA ▶](#)

 [Printer-friendly version](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Forming a Business and Getting Online](#)
- [Dealing with Legal Threats and Risks](#)
- [Newsgathering and Privacy](#)
- ▼ [Access to Government Information](#)
 - ▼ [Access to Government Records](#)
 - ▼ [Access to Records from the Federal Government](#)
 - [Who Can Request Records Under FOIA](#)
 - [What Records Are Available Under FOIA](#)
 - [How to Request Records Under FOIA](#)
 - [What Are Your Remedies Under FOIA](#)
 - [Access to Records from State Governments](#)
 - [Practical Tips for Getting Government Records](#)
 - [Access to Government Meetings](#)
 - [Identifying Federal, State, and Local Government Bodies](#)
 - [Access to Congress and the President](#)

▶ [Access to Courts and Court Records](#)

- ▶ [Intellectual Property](#)
- ▶ [Risks Associated With Publication](#)
- [Unique Content: Special Risks](#)
- [Guides and Resources](#)



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Legal Guide Navigation

- [Legal Guide Home Page](#)
- [Browse Guide Sections](#)
- [Browse by Subject](#)
- [Search the Guide](#)

Most Viewed Guide Pages

- [Fair Use](#)
- [Recording Phone Calls and Conversations](#)
- [California Recording Law](#)
- [Using the Name or Likeness of Another](#)
- [State Law: Recording](#)
- [New York Recording Law](#)
- [Linking to Copyrighted Materials](#)
- [Texas Recording Law](#)



[Home](#)
[Legal Guide](#)
[Threats Database](#)
[Research & Response](#)
[Blog](#)
[About](#)

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