

Employee's Quick Guide to...



Public Records Requests

- The Florida Public Records Act (Chapter 119, F.S.) provides the public with a right to access the records of state and local governments.
- “Public Record” means all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of the physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency. In other words, all materials made or received by the County in connection with official business, and used to perpetuate, communicate or formalize knowledge (i.e., emails, contracts, log-in sheets, maps, books, etc.).
- Unless there is a statutory exemption, the County may not refuse to allow public records to be inspected or copied by a requestor.
- An exemption is a provision of general law that indicates that a specified record or a portion of the record is not subject to public disclosure.

How to Respond to a Request

1. Politely greet the Requestor(s) and ask what records are being requested.
2. Offer the Requestor the written form to complete, but remember that public records requests DO NOT have to be in writing. If the Requestor declines to complete the form, you may clarify what records are being requested by taking good notes - either on the form or on regular paper.
3. Tell the Requestor that you acknowledge the public records request.
4. If the records requested are readily available, provide them to the Requestor for inspection or copying. If it will take some time to locate and review the records for exempt information, let the Requestor know and gather contact information to notify him/her when the records are available and if there are any costs associated with responding to the request.
5. If the Requestor declines to provide contact information, provide him/her with a telephone number where you may be contacted to provide a date when the records will be available for inspection or copying, or other information related to the request.
6. If the records are not readily available, forward the request to your department representative or Records Management Liaison to respond to the request.

Good Things to Know

The Requestor...

- Does not have to identify himself/herself or provide contact information.
- Does not have to give a reason for requesting the records.
- Can ask for staff names and titles.
- Is entitled to paper copies of records, even if the records are available online.
- May photograph the records instead of getting copies.
- May video record you in a public area while making the request.
- May make a broad request (you may ask enough questions to identify the records).

County Staff...

- Should remain calm and courteous while responding to public records requests.
- Is not required to explain or provide information about the contents of the records.
- Is not required to create documents in order to respond to a request.
- May direct the Requestor to remain in a public area while waiting for records.
- Must respond to requests in a reasonable period of time, which means the amount of time it takes to locate and review the records for exemptions.
- Should contact the County Attorney's Office at any point when there is a question about responding to the request, or whether a record is confidential or exempt from public disclosure.

Do not hesitate to contact a supervisor or manager for assistance with a public records request!

