

**Michigan Department of State**  
**Freedom of Information Act - Frequently Asked Questions**

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**Question:**

How can I submit a FOIA request?

**Answer:**

A FOIA request must be submitted in writing. For quickest service, requests may be made online using the MDOS electronic FOIA request system. Requests may also be submitted in writing or electronically to the following:

U.S. mail: Michigan Department of State  
Attn: FOIA Coordinator  
Ottawa Bldg., 4th Floor  
P.O. Box 30204  
Lansing, MI 48918

Email: MDOS-FOIA@Michigan.gov

**Question:**

Do I have to create an account to use the electronic FOIA request system?

**Answer:**

Yes. The electronic FOIA request system is accessible through the MiLogin online services portal. There is no cost to create an account and only minimal information is required to submit a FOIA request. The online system will help you keep track of current and future FOIA requests, as well as provide important communications regarding your account. You will be prompted to create an account the first time you use the system.

**Question:**

What information must I include in my written FOIA request?

**Answer:**

Effective December 28, 2018, a request from an individual, [other than an individual who qualifies as indigent under section 4(2)(a), MCL 15.234(2)(a)], must include the requesting person's complete name, address, and contact information.

If the requestor is having someone act on their behalf (as an agent), the following information for the agent must also be included:

- The agent's complete name
- The agent's address
- The agent's telephone number and email address

Mailed submissions must follow U.S. Postal Service address standards.

Note: The request must provide enough information to clearly identify the record being requested. If a request does not include adequate information, it will be rejected. Rejected requests should be revised to address any issues that caused the rejection and resubmitted.

**Question:**

What additional information can I provide to ensure I receive the information I am requesting?

**Answer:**

Please provide as much specific detail and search terms as possible. For example, if you do not specify a date range in your request, then all records will be searched, increasing processing time and driving up costs.

Requests for emails received or sent by MDOS should include the entire email address if known. If the entire email address is not available, please submit at least the email's domain name (i.e., ... @abcd.com) to assist in the search.

**Question:**

What fees may be charged when a FOIA request is submitted?

**Answer:**

Fees are charged based on requirements set by law. A detailed list of costs allowed under the law will be provided when fees are charged.

Under law, the department may charge fees for the following:

1. Labor for the search, location, and examination of public records
2. Labor for the review of public records and redacting information that is protected under state and federal law
3. Labor for the duplication or publication of public records
4. Non-paper physical media
5. Any materials used in the duplication and publication of public records
6. Mailing public records
7. Any onsite inspections of public records
8. Producing or processing CDs, DVDs, flash drives, photographs, etc. MCL 15.234

**Question:**

Will I be notified of any fees before my request is processed?

**Answer:**

If the estimated costs to process the request exceeds \$50, a 50-percent good faith deposit will be required. The balance of the deposit must be received within 45 days after you receive notice that your good-faith deposit was processed, otherwise the FOIA request is considered abandoned and cannot be completed.

**Question:**

How can I pay for my deposit or invoice?

**Answer:**

If you submitted a request through the electronic FOIA request system, then you can pay online via credit card. If you submitted the request via mail or email, or if you do not wish to pay online, please send a check or money order payable to the STATE OF MICHIGAN to the address below:

U.S. mail: Michigan Department of State  
Cashier Unit  
7064 Crowner Drive  
Lansing, MI 48918

To ensure proper credit, please enclose a copy of the department's FOIA notice for the Cashier Unit to forward upon receipt of your check.

**Question:**

Is there a provision for indigency?

**Answer:**

A requester can complete an affidavit of indigency if they are receiving public assistance. If they are not receiving public assistance, they may provide facts showing an inability to pay due to indigence. The affidavit will waive the first \$20. The completed affidavit must be notarized.

**Question:**

How long will it take to process my request and release the records to me?

**Answer:**

You will receive an initial response within five business days after your FOIA request is received by the department. MDOS has the right to extend the initial response period by an additional ten business days and a reason for the extension will be provided. Depending on the records requested, MDOS will make an initial estimate of the time frame needed to fulfill the request; this may vary depending on staff availability and workloads.

**Question:**

How will I receive my records?

**Answer:**

If your request was received by the electronic request system, a notice will be emailed to you, and your records will be available in your online account. Responses are often sent in the same form in which they were received. Results for record requests that are emailed, mailed, or delivered in person may be delivered by email, mail, or made available for pick up.

**Question:**

Are there records or information that will not be given out under FOIA?

**Answer:**

While Michigan's FOIA is a pro-disclosure statute, there are exceptions as to what may be provided under FOIA. Some exemptions can be found in [Section 13 of Michigan's FOIA, MCL 15.243](#). In addition, information that is confidential, or exempt from a FOIA request, will not be available. In accordance with the FOIA's pro-disclosure nature, information that is exempt from disclosure will be redacted when processing record requests.

**Question:**

Where can I read Michigan's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)?

**Answer:**

The [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\), 1976 PA 442](#), can be found under compiled laws on the website for Michigan's Legislature at MCL 15.231-246.

**Question:**

Who do I contact for technical assistance with the new FOIA request system?

**Answer:**

For technical assistance with the electronic FOIA request system, please contact the Department of State Information Center at 888-SOS-MICH (888-767-6424).