

## Open Records Policy– City of Philadelphia

Effective January 1, 2009

Last updated on February 14, 2018

The City of Philadelphia has adopted a policy to comply with the Commonwealth’s Act 3 of 2008, 65 P.S. §§ 67.101 et seq., commonly known as the “Right to Know Law.” With certain exceptions, members of the public have the right to inspect and/or copy such records upon request.

### 1. Definitions

- a. Right to Know Law (or Open Records Law).** Act 3 of 2008, 65 P.S. §§ 67.101 et seq., commonly known as the Right to Know Law (“Law”).
- b. Business day.** Monday through Friday during regular business hours<sup>1</sup>, except those days when the City, the main office of the Law Department, or the office, department, board or commission to which a request is submitted (hereinafter any one of which a “City Agency”) is closed. For the purpose of this Open Records Policy, City Agencies are closed when any of the following apply: (a) the City, the Law Department, or the particular City Agency operates on an “essential services only” basis; (b) the City, the main office of the Law Department, or the particular City Agency is closed for four or more hours during regular business hours; or (c) the City, the main office of the Law Department, or the particular City Agency closes for any portion of regular business hours on an emergency basis.
- c. Public Record.** Any document that satisfies the general definition of “public record” set forth in the Law and does not fall within any of the exceptions set forth therein, as the definition and exceptions are amended from time to time and as the definition and exceptions are interpreted by state, federal and/or local courts.
- d. Open Records Officer.** Any official or employee of the City of Philadelphia who is officially assigned responsibility for receiving, tracking and responding to requests for information under the Right to Know Law. The City of Philadelphia may designate a Deputy or Secondary Open Records Officer to act in the absence of an Open Records Officer.
- e. Requester.** A person who requests a record under the Right to Know Law.
- f. State Office of Open Records.** The State Office, under the Department of Economic and Community Development, as explained in §1310 of the Right to Know Law. The Office of Open Records shall be responsible for many duties, which include (but are not limited to): issuing advisory opinions, training agencies and public employees, assigning appeals officers to review decisions and conducting a biannual review of fees allowed under the Law.

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<sup>1</sup> 8:30AM-5:00PM.

## 2. Open Records Officer

Please see below for the Open Records Officer specific to each City Agency. Should no Officer be listed, the request should be directed to the Officer for the City of Philadelphia Law Department (Office of the City Solicitor). Please indicate the City Agency the request is seeking records from. Please note that some independently elected officials, including the District Attorney's Office and City Controller's Office, may have their own separate and distinct policies. You should consult their respective websites for information specific to their offices, including information concerning their respective Open Records Officers.

### **Direction of Specific Requests:**

- The City of Philadelphia Law Department represents the City of Philadelphia<sup>2</sup> on all Right to Know matters. Requests from lawyers or law firms must be directed to the Open Records Officer for the City of Philadelphia Law Department and should indicate the Office, Department, Board and/or Commission the request is seeking records from.
- Requests for Police Incident Reports must be directed to the Open Records Officer for the City of Philadelphia Department of Records.

The current list of Officers can be found below:

#### Agency

#### Officer & Contact Information

Mayor's Office

Kathleen Lonie  
Room 204 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-7508 (phone)  
(215) 686-2555 (fax)  
kathleen.lonie@phila.gov

City Council

Mary McDaniel, Esq.  
City Council Technical Staff  
Room 564 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-1945  
(215) 686-1941 (fax)  
mary.mcdaniel@phila.gov

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<sup>2</sup> Please be advised that the Law Department is not authorized to accept Right to Know Requests on behalf of the Philadelphia District Attorney. The Office of the District Attorney maintains a separate Open Records Policy and requests for that office should be directed to the Open Records Officer for the Office of the District Attorney.

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Office of the Controller

Nicole McCormack  
Office of the Controller  
1230 MSB  
1401 JFK Blvd  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-6159 (phone)  
(215) 686-3832 (fax)  
Nicole.McCormack@phila.gov

Office of the City Commissioners Officer

Nick Custodio  
Deputy Commissioner  
Office of Commissioner Deeley;  
1400 John F Kennedy Blvd  
City Hall Room 130  
Philadelphia, PA. 19107  
(215)-686-3460 (phone)  
(215) 686-3947 (fax)

Law Department

Jill Freeman, Esq.  
1515 Arch Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 683-5457 (phone)  
(215) 683-5069 (fax)  
[RightToKnow@phila.gov](mailto:RightToKnow@phila.gov)

Airport

Maryanne Mahoney  
Assistant Managing Director  
Government Affairs Officer  
Division Of Aviation  
Philadelphia International Airport  
8500 Essington Avenue  
Executive Offices  
Terminal D, 3rd Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19153  
(215) 863-3964 (phone)  
(215) 863-4627 (fax)  
Maryanne.Mahoney@phl.org

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Department of Behavioral Health  
& Intellectual Disability Services

Jeffrey Orlin  
Administrative Services Director  
Department of Behavioral Health &  
Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS)  
ARAMARK Building  
1101 Market Street, 7th Floor  
Philadelphia PA 19107 - 2907  
(215) 685-5476 (phone)  
(215) 685-5563 (fax)  
[jeffrey.orlin@phila.gov](mailto:jeffrey.orlin@phila.gov)

Board of Ethics

Nedda Massar  
Deputy Executive Director  
City of Philadelphia Board of Ethics  
One Parkway Bldg., 18th Floor  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1504  
215-686-9450 (phone)  
215-686-9453 (fax)  
[nedda.massar@phila.gov](mailto:nedda.massar@phila.gov)

Board of Pensions & Retirement

Shamika Taliaferro  
Deputy Director  
Two Penn Center Plaza, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
(215) 496-7426 (phone)  
(215) 496-3146 (fax)  
[Shamika.Taliaferro@phila.gov](mailto:Shamika.Taliaferro@phila.gov)

Board of Revision of Taxes

Carla E. Pagan, CPE  
Executive Director  
Board of Revision of Taxes  
The Curtis Center  
601 Walnut Street, Suite 325 East  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 686-4343 (phone)  
(215) 686-4336 (fax)  
[carla.pagan@phila.gov](mailto:carla.pagan@phila.gov)

Civil Service Commission

Barbara LaRocca  
Civil Service Commission  
1640 MSB  
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-2320 (phone)

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(215) 686-2374 (fax)  
barbara.larocca@phila.gov

Commerce Department

Edward Garcia  
Deputy Director  
Department of Commerce  
1515 Arch St., 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 683-2020 (phone)  
[Edward.w.garcia@phila.gov](mailto:Edward.w.garcia@phila.gov)

Commission on Human Relations

Karen Forman, Esq.  
Principal Assistant  
Commission on Human Relations  
The Curtis Center  
601 Walnut Street, Suite 300 South  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 686-4891 (phone)  
[Karen.forman@phila.gov](mailto:Karen.forman@phila.gov)

Department of Finance  
Budget Office  
Risk Management

Beth Wetzell  
Office of Finance  
1401 J.F.K Blvd., 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-6203 (phone)  
(215) 686-6202 (fax)  
Beth.A.Wetzell@phila.gov

Department of Health

Elaine M. Strunk  
Executive Assistant  
Office of the Health Commissioner  
Philadelphia Department of Public Health  
1401 JFK Blvd., Room 600 MSB  
(215) 686-5234 (phone)  
(215) 686-5212 (fax)  
elaine.strunk@phila.gov

Department of Public Property

Thomas C. McDade, III  
Deputy Chief of Staff  
Department of Public Property  
City Hall Room 780  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-7898  
Thomas.McDade@phila.gov

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Department of Revenue

Diane Evanitsky  
Department of Revenue  
Technical Staff  
1401 JFK Blvd- 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215-686-5652 (phone)  
215-686-6898 (fax)  
Diane.Evanitsky@phila.gov

Fleet Management

Dr. K Wilson  
Administrative Services Director  
Office of Fleet Management  
Land Title Building  
100 S. Broad Street, 3rd Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19110  
(215) 686-1844 (phone)  
k.wilson@phila.gov

Free Library of Philadelphia

Leslie Walker  
Chief of Staff  
Free Library of Philadelphia  
1901 Vine Street-Room 120  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
(215) 686-5306 (phone)  
(215) 686-5368 (fax)  
[lesliemw@freelibrary.org](mailto:lesliemw@freelibrary.org)

Division of Housing & Community Development  
Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Developer Services Committee

Paul D. Chrystie  
Director of Communications  
Division of Housing and Community  
Development  
City of Philadelphia  
1234 Market Street, 17th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-9721 (phone)  
paul.chrystie@phila.gov

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Labor Standards

Perritti DiVirgilio  
Director of Labor Standards  
Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Blvd Room 170  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-2132 (phone)  
[perritti.divirgilio@phila.gov](mailto:perritti.divirgilio@phila.gov)

Licenses & Inspections

Tia Platts  
Municipal Services Building Rm. 1130  
(215) 686-1441 (phone)  
(215) 686-1443 (fax)  
[Tia.Platts@phila.gov](mailto:Tia.Platts@phila.gov)

Managing Director's Office  
Office of Emergency Management

David Torres  
Administrative Services Director  
Office of the Managing Director  
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd. - 14th Fl.  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1683  
(215) 686-1988 (phone)  
(215) 686-3479 (fax)  
[david.torres@phila.gov](mailto:david.torres@phila.gov)

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Stephanie Tipton  
Chief-of-Staff  
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer  
1401 JFK Blvd; Ste 630  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-6673 (phone)  
[Stephanie.Tipton@phila.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Tipton@phila.gov)

Office of Innovation & Technology

Steven E. Robertson, Esq.  
Chief of Staff  
Office of Innovation & Technology  
City of Philadelphia  
(215) 686-8268 (phone)  
(215) 686-8258 (fax)  
[steven.robertson@phila.gov](mailto:steven.robertson@phila.gov)

Office of the Inspector General

Alexander F. DeSantis  
Office of the Inspector General  
601 Walnut Street, Suite 300 East  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 685-1770 (phone)  
[Alexander.DeSantis@phila.gov](mailto:Alexander.DeSantis@phila.gov)

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Office of Property Assessment

Drew Aldinger, Esq.  
Deputy Administrator  
Office of Property Assessment  
The Curtis Center  
601 Walnut Street - Suite 300 West  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 686-4353 (phone)  
(215) 686-9223 (fax)  
[RighttoKnowOPA@phila.gov](mailto:RighttoKnowOPA@phila.gov)

Office of Administrative Review

Melissa Andre  
100 S. Broad St., Ste 400  
Philadelphia, PA 19110  
(215) 686-5216 (phone)  
[Melissa.C.Andre@phila.gov](mailto:Melissa.C.Andre@phila.gov)

Office of Homeless Services

Linda A. White  
Office of Supportive Housing  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Suite 1030  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-6726 (phone)  
(215) 686-7126 (fax)  
[linda.white@phila.gov](mailto:linda.white@phila.gov)

Parks & Recreation

Barry A. Bessler  
Director of Policy and Compliance  
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation  
One Parkway, 10th Floor  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215-683-0203 (phone)  
215-683-0205 (fax)  
[barry.bessler@phila.gov](mailto:barry.bessler@phila.gov)

Philadelphia Department of Prisons

Gregory J. Vrato, Esq.  
Philadelphia Department of Prisons  
Director of Policy Compliance &  
Legal Affairs  
7901 State Rd.  
Philadelphia, PA 19136  
(215) 685-7840  
[Greg.Vrato@prisons.phila.gov](mailto:Greg.Vrato@prisons.phila.gov)

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Philadelphia Fire Department

Carl W. Randolph, Sr.  
Philadelphia Fire Department  
Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal  
301 Island Ave,  
Philadelphia, PA 19153  
(215) 686-1362 (phone)  
(215) 686-1162 (fax)  
[Carl.W.Randolph@phila.gov](mailto:Carl.W.Randolph@phila.gov)

Philadelphia Gas Commission

Erin Baley Lai, Esq.  
Philadelphia Gas Commission  
1515 Arch St., 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 683-0904 (phone)  
(215) 683-0911 (fax)  
[elai@phlgc.net](mailto:elai@phlgc.net)

Philadelphia Water Department

Sheilah Louis, Esq.  
Philadelphia Water Department  
ARAMARK Tower  
1101 Market Street, 5th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 685-6139 (phone)  
(215) 685-6389 (fax)  
[sheilah.louis@phila.gov](mailto:sheilah.louis@phila.gov)

Philadelphia Police Department

Lieutenant Barry Jacobs  
Philadelphia Police Department  
750 Race Street, Room 203  
Philadelphia, PA 19106  
(215) 686-3277 (phone)  
(215) 686-1183 (fax)  
[police.righttoknow@phila.gov](mailto:police.righttoknow@phila.gov)

Procurement

Pamela Peterson  
Public Information Supervisor  
Procurement Department City of Phila.  
1401 John F Kennedy Blvd., Room 150  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-4746 (phone)  
(215) 686-4716 (fax)  
[Pamela.Peterson@phila.gov](mailto:Pamela.Peterson@phila.gov)

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Department of Records

Joseph Gilorma  
City of Philadelphia Department of Records  
City Hall Room 156  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
(215) 686-1475  
Joseph.Gilorma@phila.gov

Sinking Fund

Christopher DiFusco, Esq.  
Chief Investment Officer,  
Sinking Fund Commission  
1500 John F. Kennedy Blvd  
17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 496-7463 (phone)  
(215) 496-7460 (fax)  
[Christopher.Difusco@Phila.gov](mailto:Christopher.Difusco@Phila.gov)

Streets Department

Tamalar Geiger  
City of Philadelphia, Department of Streets  
1401 JFK Blvd., Room 730 MSB  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 686-7813 (phone)  
(215) 686 -7812 (fax)  
RightToKnowStreets@phila.gov

Treasurer

Keola Harrington  
Treasurer's Office  
1401 JFK Blvd, Ste. 640  
(215) 686-3823 (phone)  
(215) 686-3518 (fax)  
[keola.harrington@phila.gov](mailto:keola.harrington@phila.gov)

Water Revenue Bureau

Lawrence Taylor  
Administrative Assistant  
(215) 686-6838 (phone)  
(215) 686-6704 (fax)  
Water Revenue Bureau  
1401 John F. Kennedy Blvd., Room 230  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
lawrence.taylor@phila.gov

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Any agency/office/board/department without an Officer currently listed

Jill Freeman, Esq.  
1515 Arch St., 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
(215) 683-5457 (phone)  
(215) 683-5069 (fax)  
[RightToKnowLaw@phila.gov](mailto:RightToKnowLaw@phila.gov)

### 3. Procedure

The Law requires that the City of Philadelphia act upon each non-anonymous written request when such request is made in person, by mail, by facsimile or by e-mail. The Law does not require that the City of Philadelphia act upon an oral request, and the City of Philadelphia shall refuse to accept oral requests. Furthermore, the Law does not require that the City of Philadelphia act upon an anonymous request, and the City of Philadelphia will refuse to honor an anonymous request.

Pursuant to the Law, the State Office of Open Records has created and published on its website a standard statewide form which must be accepted by the City of Philadelphia for the filing of a request. (<http://openrecords.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt>). Effective February 1, 2012, the City of Philadelphia will require the standard statewide form be used for the submission of Right to Know requests, and will not consider a request to be a written request pursuant to the Right to Know Law unless the request is submitted on or with the standard statewide form. Beginning February 1, 2012, the City of Philadelphia will consider any request not submitted on or with the standard statewide form to be an informal request not subject to the Right to Know Law.<sup>3</sup> If a requester submits a request on or with the standard statewide form after submitting an informal request for the same (or similar) records, the City of Philadelphia will consider the informal request to have been withdrawn. The City of Philadelphia reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to require a written request pursuant to the Right to Know Law before releasing records. A copy of the standard statewide form appears at the end of this policy.

The Law sets forth various specifications for the contents of a written request. To qualify as a written request under the Right to Know Law and the City of Philadelphia Open Records Policy the request must (a) be directed to the appropriate Open Records Officer designated above, (b) be submitted on or with the standard statewide form (beginning February 1, 2012), and (c) contain, at a minimum, the following information:

- i. name of requester;
- ii. address of requester; and
- iii. records being sought, identified or described with sufficient specificity to allow the City of Philadelphia to ascertain which records are being requested.

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<sup>3</sup> The City of Philadelphia reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to use the Right to Know Law as guidance in responding to informal requests for records and/or information.

Under the Law, the City of Philadelphia has a duty to make a good faith effort to determine if the record(s) requested is a public record and to respond as promptly as possible under the circumstances existing at the time of the request; this time shall not exceed five (5) business days from the date the request is received by the agency's Open Records Officer. The Law provides that either a final or interim response be provided to the requester within five (5) business days from the date of receipt by the agency. If the agency fails to respond within this five (5) day time period, the Open Records Request is deemed denied.

The Law and the City of Philadelphia's policy contemplates that requesters will receive a response within five (5) business days. The Law, however, does provide the City of Philadelphia with specific reasons that may be invoked to receive a single extension of time which shall not exceed thirty (30) calendar days. If an extension is invoked and no response is provided to the requester within the thirty (30) day time period, the Open Records Request is deemed denied. Additionally, should the City of Philadelphia notify the requester it needs more than the maximum thirty (30) day extension, the request is deemed denied unless the requester has agreed in writing to an extension to the date specified in the notice. If the requester agrees to the extension, the request shall be deemed denied on the day following the date specified in the notice if the agency has not provided a response by that date.

The City of Philadelphia's final response to a request will do one of the following:

- i. grant the request;
- ii. deny the request;
- iii. grant the request in part and deny the request in part; or
- iv. grant the request and redact part of the information provided pursuant to the Law and/or other applicable federal, state and local law.

#### 4. Appeals of Denied Requests

If a request for access to a record is denied (in whole or in part) or deemed denied, the requester may file an appeal as follows within fifteen (15) business days of the mailing date of the City of Philadelphia's denial as follows:

##### **Records Other Than Criminal Investigative Records**

Appeals of denials related to requests for records other than criminal investigative records must be directed to the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records at the following address:  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Open Records, Commonwealth Keystone Building,  
400 North Street, 4th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17120-0225.

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## **Criminal Investigative Records**

Appeals of denials related to requests for criminal investigative records must be directed to the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office within fifteen (15) business days of the mailing date of the City of Philadelphia's denial. Appeals to the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office should be directed to the following address: District Attorney's Office, Civil Litigation Unit, Open Records Appeals Officer, Three South Penn Square, Philadelphia, PA 19107-3499.

### **For All Administrative Appeals**

Unless the requester agrees otherwise, the Appeals Officer shall make a final determination which shall be mailed to the requester and the City of Philadelphia within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal. Should the Appeals Officer fail to issue a ruling within thirty (30) days, the appeal is deemed denied.

Before a final determination is issued, a hearing may be held. The determination by the Appeals Officer shall be a final order. The Appeals Officer shall provide a written explanation of the reasons for the decision to the requester and the City of Philadelphia.

Within thirty (30) days of the mailing date of the final determination of the Appeals Officer, a requester or the City of Philadelphia may file a petition for review or other document(s) as required by rule of court with the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas.

### **5. Fees and Charges**

Fees for duplication of records have been established and posted by the State Office of Open Records. The City of Philadelphia will charge fees consistent with the State Office of Open Records regulations.

The City of Philadelphia reserves the right to impose additional fees if it incurs costs for complying with a request, pursuant to the Right to Know Law; such additional fees, when charged, must be reasonable. This includes, but is not limited to, fees for enhanced electronic access and certified copies of documents.

### **6. Written Policies and Regulations**

The City of Philadelphia and each Open Records Officer shall retain the discretion and authority to adopt any other written policies that are consistent with the Right to Know Law, and these policies, as amended from time to time, that they deem to be necessary or prudent, consistent with the Right to Know Law.

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ATTACHMENT  
STANDARD RIGHT TO KNOW REQUEST FORM





# pennsylvania

OFFICE OF OPEN RECORDS

## STANDARD RIGHT-TO-KNOW REQUEST FORM

DATE REQUESTED: \_\_\_\_\_

REQUEST SUBMITTED BY: \_\_\_E-MAIL \_\_\_U.S. MAIL \_\_\_FAX \_\_\_IN-PERSON

REQUEST SUBMITTED TO (Agency name & Address): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF REQUESTER: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/COUNTY (Required): \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

**RECORDS REQUESTED:** *\*Provide as much specific detail as possible so the agency can identify the information. Please use additional sheets if necessary.*

**DO YOU WANT COPIES?** YES or NO

**DO YOU WANT TO INSPECT THE RECORDS?** YES or NO

**DO YOU WANT CERTIFIED COPIES OF RECORDS?** YES or NO

**\*\* PLEASE NOTE: RETAIN A COPY OF THIS REQUEST FOR YOUR FILES \*\***  
**\*\* IT IS A REQUIRED DOCUMENT IF YOU WOULD NEED TO FILE AN APPEAL \*\***

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*FOR AGENCY USE ONLY*

**RIGHT TO KNOW OFFICER:**

**DATE RECEIVED BY THE AGENCY:**

**AGENCY FIVE (5) BUSINESS DAY RESPONSE DUE:**

*\*\*Public bodies may fill anonymous verbal or written requests. If the requestor wishes to pursue the relief and remedies provided for in this Act, the request must be in writing. (Section 702.) Written requests need not include an explanation why information is sought or the intended use of the information unless otherwise required by law. (Section 703.)*

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