

The University of Akron

Procedure for Complying with Public Records Requests

Records Compliance Office

To facilitate prompt access to public records and to ensure compliance with the Ohio Public Records Act (Ohio Revised Code 149.43), all employees responsible for making University records available to the public are expected to comply with the University's Records Policy.

I. Making a Request

To facilitate a timely response, members of the media and any other member of the public seeking records should submit requests to the Records Compliance Office, Buchtel Hall 63, 302 Buchtel Common, Akron, Ohio 44325-4706

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity and specificity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. The University may decline to create a record that contains the information requested if the record does not already exist, or to seek out and retrieve records that contain specific information that may be of interest to the requester.

Requests may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing (including e-mail). The University may not condition the availability of public records by requiring disclosure of the requester's identity or the intended use of the requested public record. Should it facilitate a response or enhance the ability of the University to identify, locate, or deliver the public records sought by the requester, the University may inquire about the requester's identity and/or the intended use of the information requested. The University may do so, however, only after disclosing to the requester that a written request is not mandatory and that the requester may decline to reveal his or her identity or to provide information about the intended use of the requested information.

II. Assisting with Requests

If a requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that the University cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the University is to provide the requester with an opportunity to revise the request. In doing so, the University shall assist the requester by informing the requester of the manner in which the office keeps its records.

Should a request not be considered "routine," such as a request seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research or review, the University office should, whenever practicable, follow-up with a response indicating that it is in receipt of the request and that responsive records will be promptly made available for inspection or copies within a reasonable period of time. The University may not limit the number of public records requests that a single individual can make, nor limit the number of public records that will be made available during a fixed period of time.

When a public records request is made to examine a personnel file, the University office will, to the extent practicable, notify the employee that his or her records have been requested, and if known, the name of the individual making the request.

III. Making Records Available and Payment for Records

Public records are available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays, and the University will provide copies of records within a reasonable period of time following the request. Records cannot always be made available for inspection or copying upon demand. Indeed, records must be reviewed and non-public information removed before inspection or copying is permitted. The amount of time that records will be made available to a requester will depend upon, among other things, the number of records requested, the location of the records, the medium in which the records are stored, the need for legal review, and the need to redact information. The director of Archival Services serves as the University Records Officer pursuant to R.C. §149.33(b), and is responsible for developing an efficient and economical program for records retention, disposition, and destruction of university records.

The University may require prepayment of costs associated with producing copies, including copying and mailing expenses. The University may charge only its actual cost of producing copies of the records.

IV. Denial of Records or Information Contained in a Record

When making a public record available for inspection or copying, the University shall notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible. A redaction (i.e., removal of information) is permissible so long as authorized under applicable law. For example, Social Security numbers are to be removed from a document before it is released. Moreover, most student education records and records containing intellectual property or trade secrets are not to be disclosed.

If a record is ultimately denied, in part or in whole, the University shall provide the requester with an explanation, including legal authority, setting forth why the record was not provided. If the initial request was provided in writing, the explanation also shall be provided in writing. The Office of General Counsel shall be consulted regarding any applicable legal authority before denying any request in whole or in part.

V. Contacting the Office of General Counsel

Should requesters not receive a communication from the University within 10 business days of issuing the request, they are encouraged to contact the Office of General Counsel at 330-972-7869.

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