

Requests to Obtain and/or Inspect Public Records

Management Directive, 02-08 (REV) | Revision Date: 02/09/2026

Overview

This directive describes procedures to follow when a request is made (verbal or written) for copies of public records; or a request is made to inspect public records. This directive does not apply to requests for Department of Children and Family Services' case records or personnel records, as they are not considered to be public records.

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Version Summary

This management directive was updated from the 02/27/19 version to update Government Codes regarding the California Public Records Act. The format, addresses, emails and office names have been updated as well.

POLICY

Requests for Public Records

The Department shall respond to requests for public records in conformity with the California Public Records Act and within guidelines provided by the State Attorney General, the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller, Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (CEO) and the Office of the County Counsel (County Counsel). All Bureaus shall provide support as needed in the identification of records required to respond to a request.

The Department must reply to all requests within a 10 calendar day period whether records will be disclosed, or it risks paying the requester's costs and attorney fees for non-compliance with the Act. For requests received after business hours or on a weekend or holiday, the next business day will be considered the date of receipt. If the 10th day falls on a weekend or holiday, the next business day will be considered the deadline to respond. The Department may seek a 14-day extension due to the existence of unusual circumstances under Government Code section 7922.535.

All media-related requests to inspect or obtain copies of Department of Children and Family Services public records shall be directed to the Office of Strategic Communication, 510 S. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020, StrategicComms@dcfs.lacounty.gov. All media requests shall be given priority and will be reviewed by the Office of Strategic Communication.

Non-media public records requests should be directed to the Public Inquiry Section, 510 S. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90020, Tel.: (213) 351-5602, FAX (213) 487-4431, or email: RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

Fee Information

Fees for copying public records are established by the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller. The standard cost of three cents (\$0.03) per page and seventy-five (\$0.75) per order handling fee shall be charged for all requests under the Public Records Act unless the fee is waived. If the request is for specific documents, this will be the only charge. Refer to the County Public Records Request webpage for [general guidance](#) and for the latest [copying charges](#).

When requested by the person/entity, there may be no charge for public records that are available in electronic format and can be easily emailed to the requester. However, if programming by BIS is required, an hourly fee will be assessed.

The Public Inquiry Section and the Office of Strategic Communication shall consult and coordinate with DCFS Accounts Receivable as to the cost and tracking of payments in conjunction with production of the requested records.

Once an estimate is provided, the requester shall make payment of the amount to the Department before work is commenced on the request. Any overpayment or underpayment shall be reconciled at the time the records are provided to the requester.

If the request is from the media, charges for duplicating routine records shall be waived as directed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors [policy](#).

PROCEDURE

When a Verbal Request is Made for Copies of Public Records

Receiving Staff Responsibilities

1. Inform the requesting party that a written request is preferred and that written requests should be sent to DCFS Public Inquiry Section, 510 S. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90020, faxed to (213) 487-4431, or emailed to RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
2. Advise the requesting party that the request should be as specific as possible in order for the Department to respond appropriately. Staff in the Public Inquiry Section can assist in helping the requester identify records responsive to their area of inquiry and answer any questions at (213) 351-5602.
3. If the requester is asking for DCFS policies and procedures, refer them to <https://policy.dcfs.lacounty.gov>.

When a Written Request is Received for a Copy of a Public Record

Receiving Staff Responsibilities

1. Scan a copy of the request and envelope to the Public Inquiry Section and email to RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov or fax at (213) 487-4431.
2. Forward the original request with the envelope to DCFS Public Inquiry Section, 510 S. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90020.

Public Inquiry Section Responsibilities

1. Review the request to determine if the records requested belong to the Department.
2. If so, email a copy of the request to the assigned County Counsel at [the Office of the County Counsel](#) for assignment and ongoing consultation as necessary.
 - a. If the Public Inquiry Section and County Counsel deem the request to be

"sensitive," County Counsel will handle the response on behalf of DCFS, including drafting any and all correspondence. A "sensitive" request may include, but is not limited to, a Public Records Act (PRA) request seeking the records of a Department Head, the Board of Supervisors, multiple departments, or when the requester is a law firm. The Public Inquiry Section will assist with the handling of the "sensitive" request by tracking the request, locating responsive records, and reviewing the records for responsiveness and applicable exemptions/privileges.

3. If the records requested are not identifiable, assist the requester with making a focused and effective request that reasonably describes identifiable records.
 - a. Describe the information technology and physical location in which the records exist.
 - b. Provide suggestions for overcoming any practical basis for denying access to the records or information sought.
4. If the records requested are identifiable and can be disclosed, send the PRA request to the appropriate supporting bureaus for responsive records.
 - a. If the supporting bureaus request an extension, inform county counsel.

Supporting Bureaus Responsibilities

1. When a PRA request is received, immediately review and specify records that are readily available, or that need further data mining and/or retrieval from storage.
2. If you are able to provide all or some of the requested documents within three calendar days, inform the Public Inquiry Section via email at RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
3. If it will take more than three calendar days to search, identify, retrieve and photocopy the documents, inform the Public Inquiry Section via email and ask for an extension.
4. If any of the documents cannot be provided, inform the Public Inquiry Section via email and provide an explanation for the unavailable missing record(s).

When the Responsive Records Have Been Identified

Public Inquiry Section Responsibilities

1. Prior to releasing any documents to the requester, consult with County Counsel to ensure that all responsive documents are releasable. Inform County Counsel of any costs associated with producing the documents for the requester, if applicable.
2. Within 10 calendar days of receiving the request, provide a written response to the requester. The response should be reviewed and approved by County Counsel.

- a. If the appropriate Bureau has not provided all records, contact the Bureau and arrange receipt of the pending document/records. Include the estimated date of production for the records to the requester.
- b. If the fee will not be waived, include the estimated fee for providing the records and explain that the fee is due prior to the production of the records.
- c. Instruct the requester to submit a check or money order payable to the Department of Children and Family Services and send to the Deposit Unit, 510 S. Vermont Ave. 14th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90020.
- d. Instruct the requester to indicate on the memo line of the check or money order (or other writing accompanying payment) that payment is for a PRA – Requester's name and date. When payment is received, a copy will be scanned and emailed to the Public Inquiry Section. The records will then be released after consulting with County Counsel.

3. If the records cannot be produced, prepare a written response to the requester explaining the reasons why they cannot be produced and cite any applicable California Public Records Act code sections. Have County Counsel review and approve the written response before releasing to the requester.
4. Send the completed written response and requested records to the requester.

When a Request is Made to Inspect Public Records

Receiving Staff Responsibilities

1. In response to a verbal request to inspect public records, refer the requesting party to the Public Inquiry Section Office of Litigation Management at (213) 351-5602.
2. In response to a written request to inspect Public Records:
 - a. Fax or scan a copy of the request and a copy of the envelope to the Public Inquiry Section at fax (213) 487-4431 or email RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov.
 - b. Forward the original with the envelope to DCFS Public Inquiry Section, 510 S. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90020.

Public Inquiry Section Responsibilities

1. In response to a verbal request to inspect public records, clarify what records are being requested.
2. Inform the requesting party that a written request is preferred and that written requests should be sent to DCFS Public Inquiry Section, 510 S. Vermont Ave. Los Angeles, CA 90020, fax (213) 487-4431 or email RecordRequest@dcfs.lacounty.gov.

3. Conference with County Counsel to determine whether the request meets the guidelines established by the California Public Records Act.
4. If our Department is not able to make the records available for inspection because it has been determined that they do not constitute public records pursuant to the California Public Records Act, notify the requester within 10 calendar days.
5. If our Department is able to comply with the request, immediately notify the supporting Bureau via email and request an appointment for the requester to view the records during regular business hours, Monday through Friday (except holidays).
6. If the records are to be reviewed in person, inform the appropriate Bureau that a DCFS employee must be present at all times to oversee the inspection process and ensure that documents are not altered, removed, or copied.
7. Notify the requesting party by telephone, email, or by mail of the time and place of the appointment and request that they confirm that the date and time is acceptable.
8. Once the requesting party has confirmed that they will be present, notify the appropriate supporting Bureau that the date and time has been accepted.
9. Confirm with the appropriate Bureau that the record was reviewed.
10. If copies of the records that were inspected are requested, proceed as directed [above](#).

Supporting Bureaus Responsibilities

1. Within three calendar days, contact the Public Inquiry Section to discuss when and where the requesting party may inspect the records in question.
2. If copies of the records inspected are request, proceed as directed [above](#).

APPROVALS

County Counsel Approval

- Written Response

HELPFUL LINKS

Statutes

[Government Code \(GOV\) Section 7921](#), et. seq. – governs the release of public records for our Department.

[GOV Section 7922.525](#) - states, in part, that public records are open to inspection at all times during normal office hours and that every person has a right to inspect any public record except as enumerated in Section 7927.500 et. seq.

[GOV Section 7922.530](#) - states, in part, that except with respect to public records exempt from disclosure, upon receipt of a request for a copy of a record that reasonably describes an identifiable record or records, our Department shall make the record promptly available to any person upon payment of fees covering direct costs of duplication or a statutory fee, if applicable. Upon request, an exact copy shall be provided unless impracticable to do so.

[GOV Section 7922.535](#) - states, in part, that upon a request for a copy of records our Department shall within 10 calendar days from receipt of the request determine whether the request, in whole or in part, seeks copies of disclosable public records in the possession of our Department and shall promptly notify the person making the request of the determination and reasons therefore. In “unusual circumstances,” the time limit prescribed in this section may be extended by written notice by the director or his/her designee to the person making the request stating the reasons for the extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be dispatched. No notice shall specify a date that would result in an extension for more than 14 days.

[GOV Section 7922.570\(b\)](#) - states, in part, that any agency that has information constituting an identifiable public record (not exempt from disclosure pursuant to this chapter) that is in an electronic format shall make that information available in an electronic format when requested by any person.

[GOV Section 7922.600](#) – states, in part that when a request to inspect or obtain a copy of public records is received, the public agency shall assist the member of public to make a focused effective request.

[GOV Section 7927.500](#) et. seq. – describes records that are not required to be disclosed.

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