

7—2505.3(17A,22) Requests for access to records.

2505.3(1) Location of record. A request for access to public records should be directed to the agency's address, the agency's email, or the agency's office where the record is kept. Agency staff will promptly forward public records requests to the lawful custodian when such a request is misdirected.

2505.3(2) Office hours. The agency is obligated to provide access to the public records it maintains during its regular office hours. The agency will post the schedule of these office hours on the agency's website to facilitate access to public records.

2505.3(3) Request for access. Requests for access to public records maintained by the agency shall be made, whenever possible, by email. Otherwise, requests can be made in writing, in person, by telephone using the agency's telephone number, or through other electronic means made available by the agency. Requests should identify the particular public records sought by name or description in order to facilitate identification of relevant public records. Requests should include the name, address, email, and telephone number of the person requesting the information. A member of the public need not give a reason for requesting public records. For public records requests that involve searches of electronic stores of information, the agency may condition the search on the requester providing search terms for the search.

2505.3(4) Response to requests. Access to public records will be provided promptly upon request unless the size or nature of the request requires additional time to complete. If the size or nature of the request causes a delay in compliance, the lawful custodian will comply with the request as soon as feasible. Access to public records may be delayed for one of the purposes authorized by Iowa Code section 22.8(4) or 22.10(4). The lawful custodian will promptly give notice to the requester of the reason for any delay in access to public records and an estimate of the length of that delay and, upon request, will promptly provide that notice to the requester in writing.

The agency that maintains a record claimed to be a public record may deny access to the record only if a denial is appropriate under Iowa Code sections 22.8(4) and 22.10(4) or based on a reasonable belief that the record is a confidential record or that its disclosure is prohibited by a court order. In addition, access to confidential records is generally not allowed. However, access may be allowed pursuant to the provisions of rule 7—2505.4(17A,22), as well as other applicable provisions of law.

2505.3(5) Security of record. No person may, without permission from the lawful custodian, search or remove any public record from the agency's files. Examination and copying or transmission of agency public records will be supervised by the lawful custodian or that person's designee. Public records will be protected from damage and disorganization.

2505.3(6) Copying. Electronic copies of records will be provided in response to a public records request whenever possible. When physical paper copies are demanded by a requester, a reasonable number of such physical copies of a public record may be made in the agency's office. If photocopy equipment is not available in the office where a public record is kept, the lawful custodian will permit its examination in that office and arrange to have copies promptly made elsewhere.

2505.3(7) Fees.

a. When charged. The agency may charge fees in connection with the examination or copying of public records only if the fees are allowed under the law. To the extent permitted by applicable law, the payment of fees may be waived when the imposition of fees is inequitable or when a waiver is in the public interest. The determination of whether to waive fees is in the sole discretion of the agency.

b. Fees and costs. The agency may charge for the actual cost of producing public records. These charges may include the actual cost of making photocopies, the actual cost of media necessary to convey electronic copies of public records, and the actual costs of mailing public records. Pricing schedules for these actual costs will be prominently posted on the agency's website. The agency may also charge for the expense associated with supervising and searching for public records. These hourly charges will be based on the actual hourly rate of the person performing the task. The agency will ensure that the employee rate charged is as low as possible based on the circumstances. The agency may impose hourly charges only after the first three hours of labor, which will be provided at no cost to the requester. For any additional review by the agency to address questions of confidentiality, the agency may charge the requester the actual hourly rate of the attorney performing the review, although the first three hours of the attorney's time will be provided at no cost to the requester.

c. Advance payment. When the estimated total fee exceeds \$250, the agency may require an advance payment from the requester to cover all or a part of the estimated fee before proceeding with the work of gathering and reviewing potentially relevant records. If a requester has an unpaid balance from a previous records request, the agency may require the requester to pay both the unpaid balance and the current estimate, regardless of value, before proceeding with the review of public records.

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