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## Title 28 – Judicial Administration

### Chapter I – Department of Justice

#### Part 16 – Production or Disclosure of Material or Information

##### Subpart A – Procedures for Disclosure of Records Under the Freedom of Information Act

**Source:** AG Order No. 3517–2015, 80 FR 18106, Apr. 3, 2015, unless otherwise noted.

**Authority:** 5 U.S.C. 301, 552, 552a, 553; 28 U.S.C. 509, 510, 534; 31 U.S.C. 3717.

### § 16.3 Requirements for making requests.

(a) *General information.*

- (1) The Department has a decentralized system for responding to FOIA requests, with each component designating a FOIA office to process records from that component. All components have the capability to receive requests electronically either through email or a web portal. To make a request for records of the Department, a requester should write directly to the FOIA office of the component that maintains the records being sought. A request will receive the quickest possible response if it is addressed to the FOIA office of the component that maintains the records sought. The Department's FOIA Reference Guide, which may be accessed as described in § 16.1(a), contains descriptions of the functions of each component and provides other information that is helpful in determining where to make a request. Each component's FOIA office and any additional requirements for submitting a request to a given component are listed in Appendix I to this part. Part 0 of this chapter also summarizes the functions of each component. These references can all be used by requesters to determine where to send their requests within the Department.
- (2) A requester may also send requests to the FOIA/PA Mail Referral Unit, Justice Management Division, Department of Justice, 950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20530–0001, or via email to [MRUFOIA.Requests@usdoj.gov](mailto:MRUFOIA.Requests@usdoj.gov), or via fax to (202) 616–6695. The Mail Referral Unit will forward the request to the component(s) that it determines to be most likely to maintain the records that are sought.
- (3) A requester who is making a request for records about himself or herself must comply with the verification of identity provision set forth in subpart D of this part.
- (4) Where a request for records pertains to a third party, a requester may receive greater access by submitting either a notarized authorization signed by that individual or a declaration made in compliance with the requirements set forth in 28 U.S.C. 1746 by that individual authorizing disclosure of the records to the requester, or by submitting proof that the individual is deceased (e.g., a copy of a death certificate or an obituary). As an exercise of administrative discretion, each component can require a requester to supply additional information if necessary in order to verify that a particular individual has consented to disclosure.

- (b) *Description of records sought.* Requesters must describe the records sought in sufficient detail to enable Department personnel to locate them with a reasonable amount of effort. To the extent possible, requesters should include specific information that may assist a component in identifying the requested records, such as the date, title or name, author, recipient, subject matter of the record, case number, file designation, or reference number. Requesters should refer to Appendix I to this part for additional, component-specific requirements. In general, requesters should include as much detail as possible about

the specific records or the types of records that they are seeking. Before submitting their requests, requesters may contact the component's FOIA contact or FOIA Public Liaison to discuss the records they are seeking and to receive assistance in describing the records. If after receiving a request a component determines that it does not reasonably describe the records sought, the component shall inform the requester what additional information is needed or why the request is otherwise insufficient. Requesters who are attempting to reformulate or modify such a request may discuss their request with the component's designated FOIA contact, its FOIA Public Liaison, or a representative of the Office of Information Policy ("OIP"), each of whom is available to assist the requester in reasonably describing the records sought. If a request does not reasonably describe the records sought, the agency's response to the request may be delayed.