

## MAKE A PUBLIC RECORDS (FOIA) REQUEST

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The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Title 2.2, Chapter 37, Sections 2.2-3700 through 2.2-3714 of the Code of Virginia, guarantees citizens of the Commonwealth and representatives of the media access to public records in the possession of public bodies, public officials and public employees or agents.

Public records include any writing or recording, in any format (including handwritten notes, typewritten documents, electronic files, text messages and audio or video recordings), prepared or owned by, or in the possession of a public body or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business. All public records are presumed to be open, and may only be withheld if a specific statutory exemption applies. A record of the discussion or transaction of public business is considered a public record even if not stored on county-issued equipment.

The purpose of FOIA is to ensure the people of the Commonwealth ready access to public records in the custody of a public body or its officers and employees, and free entry to meetings of public bodies. In order to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operations of government, the provisions of FOIA are to be liberally construed and any exemption from public access is to be narrowly construed.

Citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia and representatives of the media have the following rights:

- To inspect and/or to receive copies of public records
- To request that any charges for the requested records be estimated in advance
- To file a petition in general district court or circuit court to enforce FOIA

Middlesex County Clerk of Circuit Court's office must respond to your request within five working days of receiving it, with Day One being considered to be the day after your request is received. The five-day period does not include weekends or holidays. If it is practically impossible to respond to your request within the five-day period, we must state this in writing, explaining the conditions that make the response impossible. This will allow seven additional working days to respond to your request, giving a total of 12 working days to respond to your request.

For more information or to make a FOIA request, contact:

Rachel Hartenbach, Clerk of Court

PO Box 158

Saluda, VA 23149

(804) 758-5317

[rhartenbach@vacourts.gov](mailto:rhartenbach@vacourts.gov)