

SUBURBAN LIBRARY COOPERATIVE

WRITTEN PUBLIC SUMMARY OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The Suburban Library Cooperative ("SLC") adopts this written public summary pursuant to the requirements of Section 4(4) of the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, 1976 PA 442 ("FOIA") so that the public will understand SLC's Procedures and Guidelines for processing FOIA requests. This is a summary of the Procedures and Guidelines. A complete copy of the Procedures and Guidelines is available at the Suburban Library Cooperative located at 44750 Delco Blvd., Sterling Heights, MI 48313, or on the website at www.libcoop.net.

A. How Can I Request a Public Record?

- A person (except those persons incarcerated in state, county or federal correctional facilities), may request public records.
- The requestor must send a written request for the public record to SLC. A request can be made through a letter, in person, or sent by electronic transmission. The requests should be directed to the FOIA Coordinator. The contact information is as follows:

Tammy Turgeon
FOIA Coordinator
Suburban Library Cooperative
44750 Delco Boulevard
Sterling Heights, MI 48313

- The requestor will not be required to use a specific form or format, but requests must identify the public record sufficiently to allow SLC to find the requested record.
- SLC may, but is not required to, respond to a verbal request. However, if SLC believes the information is available on its website, SLC will inform the requestor of the website location where practicable and to the best of his or her knowledge.

B. When Can I Expect a Response?

- Unless otherwise agreed to in writing, SLC will respond or seek a deposit within five business days after it receives the request. However, SLC may extend that time period by ten business days.
- Please keep in mind that a request sent by e-mail or other electronic means is not considered received until one business day after it is transmitted. If the request is sent to a spam or junk mail folder, it is not considered received until one day after it is discovered.

C. How Can I Understand the Response?

- If SLC grants a written request in full, the requestor will receive a notice indicating that it has been granted.
- However, if the request is denied or denied in part, SLC shall provide any or all the following information, depending upon the reason for the denial:

- o An explanation of the basis that the public record, or portion of that public record, is exempt from disclosure, including a description of the information that is separated or deleted.
 - o A certificate that the public record does not exist under the name given by the requestor or by another name reasonably known to SLC.
 - o A full explanation of the requesting person's right to (1) submit to the Board of SLC ("Board") a written appeal; or (2) seek judicial review of the denial under Section 10 of the FOIA. (See below for more details).
 - o Notice of the right to receive attorneys' fees and damages if a court determines that SLC has not complied and orders disclosure of all or a portion of a public record.
- If a request is granted in part or granted in full, SLC will require payment before providing documents.

D. What if I Request Documents Available on the Website?

- If documents are available on the website, to the degree practicable, the response will include a specific webpage address where the requested information is available.
- SLC will inform the requestor of the additional charge to receive copies of the public records that are available on its website.

E. What Fees Will SLC Charge?

- The FOIA Coordinator will provide a detailed itemization of costs.
- For labor costs, the fee shall not exceed the sum of the following components:
 - o Hourly Wage. SLC will not charge more than the hourly wage of its lowest-paid employee capable of searching for, locating, and examining the public records; separating and deleting exempt information from non-exempt information; and for duplication and publication regardless of whether that person is available or who actually performs the labor, except if SLC does not employ a person capable of separating and deleting exempt information from non-exempt information, it may treat necessary contracted labor costs for that purpose in the same manner as employee labor costs but may not exceed 6 times the State minimum hourly wage.
 - o Time Increments: The fee will be charged in fifteen (15) minute increments, with all partial time rounded down, except the labor fee for duplication and publication, which shall be charged in one minute increments.
 - o Determination of Unreasonably High Labor Costs. The fee for searching for, locating and examining public records and separating exempt information from non-exempt information (including redacting) will not be charged, unless failure to charge a fee would result in unreasonably high costs to SLC because of the nature of the request in the particular instance, and SLC specifically identifies the nature of these unreasonably high costs.

- o Overtime. Overtime wages shall not be included unless agreed to by the requestor.
 - o Description of Charge. The detailed itemization will include both the hourly wage and the number of hours charged.
 - o Fringe Benefit Costs. SLC may also add up to 50% to the applicable labor charge amount (but may not exceed actual costs) to cover or partially cover the cost of fringe benefits if it clearly notes the percentage multiplier used to account for benefits, unless a requestor wants records that are available on the website. In which case, the fringe benefit multiplier can be greater than the 50% limitation.
- For public records provided to the requestor on nonpaper physical media (discs, flash drives, e-mails), SLC may charge the actual and most reasonably economical cost of the media.
 - For paper copies, SLC may charge the actual total incremental cost of necessary duplication or publication not to exceed \$.10 per page (single or double sided) for 8-1/2- by 11-inch paper or 8-1/2- by 14-inch paper. SLC will charge the actual cost of copies made on paper of a different size. SLC will use double-sided printing, if cost saving and available.
 - SLC may charge the actual cost of mailing and the least expensive form of postal delivery confirmation.

F. Will a Deposit be Required?

- SLC may require a good-faith deposit of V2 of the estimated fee if the entire fee estimate or charge authorized under the FOIA exceeds \$50.00, based on a good-faith calculation of the total estimated fee.
- SLC will also provide a best efforts, nonbinding estimate of the time frame it will take SLC to provide the public records to the requestor.
- If SLC has granted a prior request but has not been paid in full, SLC may require a deposit of up to 100% of the estimated fee if all of the following apply:
 - o The final fee for the prior written request was not more than 105% of the estimated fee.
 - o The public records made available contained the information being sought in the prior written request and are still in SLC's possession.
 - o The public records were made available to the individual, subject to payment, within the time frame estimate described Section 4(7) of the FOIA.
 - o Ninety days have passed since SLC notified the individual in writing that the public records were available for pick up or mailing.
 - o The individual is unable to show proof of prior payment to SLC.
 - o SLC calculates a Detailed Itemization that is the basis for the current written request's increased estimated fee deposit.

SLC shall no longer require an increased estimated fee deposit if any of the following apply:

- o The individual is able to show proof of prior payment in full to SLC;
- o SLC is subsequently paid in full for the applicable prior written request; or
- o Three hundred sixty-five (365) days have passed since the individual made the written request for which full payment was not remitted to SLC.

G. Am I Entitled to a Waiver or Reduction of Fees?

- A reduction of the fee by \$20.00 is available to certain individuals who submit an affidavit stating they are indigent and receiving public assistance, or if not receiving public assistance, stating facts showing inability to pay because of indigency. For this reduction to apply, the individual may not have received discounted fees twice during that calendar year and the person may not be requesting on behalf of parties who are paying to make the request.
- A reduction of the fee by \$20.00 is also available to certain non-profit organizations formally carrying out activities under subtitle C of the developmental disabilities assistance and bill of rights act of 2000, and the protection and advocacy for individuals with mental illness act, provided that the request is made on behalf of the organization or its clients, is made for a reason consistent with the laws under Section 931 of the mental health code and is accompanied by documentation of its designation by the state.
- The FOIA Coordinator may reduce or waive the imposition of fees if the FOIA Coordinator determines that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest because searching for or furnishing copies of the public record can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public.
- If SLC does not respond to a written request in a timely manner as required by the FOIA, SLC shall reduce the charges for labor costs by 5% for each day SLC exceeds the time permitted, with a maximum 50% reduction, if the late response was willful and intentional or the written request included specific language as set forth more fully in the Procedures and Guidelines.

H. How Can I Appeal a Decision to Deny All or Part of My Request?

- If a requestor desires to appeal all or part of a decision to deny a request, the requestor must submit to the Board a written appeal that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies the reason or reasons for reversal of the denial.
- Board is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled meeting after submission of the written appeal.
- SLC will respond within ten business days by reversing the disclosure denial, upholding the denial, revising in part and upholding in part the denial or issuing a ten business day extension.

I. How Can I Appeal a Determination of the Fee or Deposit Amount?

- The requestor may submit to Board a written appeal for a fee reduction that specifically states the word "appeal" and identifies how the required fee exceeds the amount permitted under the Procedures and Guidelines or Section 4 of the FOIA.
- Board is not considered to have received a written appeal until the first regularly scheduled meeting after submission of the written appeal.
- SLC will respond within ten business days by waiving the fee, reducing the fee and explaining the basis for the remaining fee, upholding the fee or issuing a ten business day extension.

J. Can I File a Lawsuit Regarding the Denial of a FOIA Request?

- If Board fails to respond to a written appeal or if Board upholds all or a portion of the disclosure denial that is the subject of the written appeal, the requestor may seek judicial review of the nondisclosure by commencing a civil action within 180 days after SLC's final determination to deny a request. A requestor may also commence a civil action in the circuit court to compel SLC's disclosure of the public records within 180 days after SLC's final determination to deny a request. The requestor is not required to appeal the denial to Board before commencing the civil action.
- If a person prevails in an action regarding the denial of a request, the court shall award reasonable attorneys fees, costs and disbursements. If the person prevails in part, the court may award all or a portion of the attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements. If the court determines the FOIA was arbitrarily or capriciously violated, the court shall order a civil fine of \$1,000.00 to be paid to the state treasury. The court may also award actual, compensatory or punitive damages.

K. Can I File a Lawsuit Regarding the Fee Charged For a FOIA Request?

- A requestor may commence a civil action in the circuit court for a fee reduction if SLC
 - (1) failed to respond to a written appeal or (2) issued a determination of a written appeal. This action must be filed within 45 days after receiving notice of the determination of an appeal to Board. The requestor must file an appeal for a fee reduction before commencing a circuit court action.
- If a person prevails in an action by receiving a reduction of 50% or more of the total fee,
 - the court may award all or a portion of the reasonable attorneys' fees. If the court determines FOIA was arbitrarily or capriciously violated, the court shall order a civil fine of \$500.00 to be paid to the state treasury. The court may also award actual, compensatory or punitive damages.