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Director

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



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Guidelines for Access to Public Records: California Public Records Act (Government Code section 6250 et seq.)

The Public has a right to inspect and/or obtain copies of public records maintained by state and local agencies pursuant to the California Public Records Act (CPRA). While many records are accessible, the CPRA as well as other statutes may protect (exempt) records from disclosure, including but not limited to, confidential records such as medical records, investigative records, private information about other people (such as foster families), trade secrets, advice from Department lawyers, records in connection with pending litigation, etc. The Department must review requested records to determine if an exemption applies before a record may be inspected or copied. In addition, many records are readily available on the Department's Website at www.cdss.ca.gov.

Request for Inspection or Copies of Public Records: In order to help the Department provide records promptly, requestors should provide specific information about the records they seek. When a record cannot be identified by name, the requestor should attempt to be as specific as possible in describing the record, based on its content. If known, requestors should indicate the office, division, branch or section of the Department that created or maintains the records. When a request is not sufficiently specific, Department staff will help the requestor to identify the information, describe how the records are maintained or their physical location, and provide suggestions on how to overcome practical barriers to disclosure. The Department does not supplement responses to previous requests when new records are created or received. A separate request must be submitted each time records are sought.

To ensure accuracy in responding to a request for public records, the Department encourages the submission of all requests in writing. Requests can also be made orally, by telephone or in person at a public counter in one of our offices. You do not need to disclose why you want the records, but for requests that cannot be completed immediately we may need to be able to contact you. Please direct all requests to: California Department of Social Services, Legal Division, ATTN: PRA Request, 744 P Street, MS 8-5-161, Sacramento, CA 95814. Fax: (916) 654-1171. Or e-mail: PRARrequest@dss.ca.gov. You may call to inquire about filing a Public Records Act request or about the status of a current request at (888) 422-3120.

Response Time: Public records in the possession of the Department that are not exempt from disclosure shall be available for inspection during the normal business hours of the Department (8:00 am – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday). If the requestor seeks inspection of numerous records, a mutually agreeable time shall be established for the inspection. Departmental functions will not be suspended to permit the inspection of records, and records will not be available for inspection during periods when Department personnel in the performance of their duties require the records. Records will not be removed from the possession of the Department. A Department employee will be present during the inspection of records.

Some simple requests can be satisfied immediately, others may require more time. Regardless, records that are not exempt from disclosure shall be available in a reasonable period of time. The Department will notify you within ten days of receipt of your request if the Department has records that can be disclosed, in whole or in part. Under some circumstances the Department is allowed up to 14 additional calendar days to determine what records exist and what can be disclosed. By the end of this period, the Department will notify you whether and when records will be produced. If some or all of the records you requested cannot be released because they are exempt under law, the Department will let you know what exemptions apply.

Fees: There is no charge for records copied if the requestor uses their own equipment on the premises. If the Department makes copies, the requester must pay \$0.20 per page. However, charges are waived if the request is limited to 49 pages per month. A minimum charge of \$10 will apply. If the public records request is 50 pages or more, payment must be received in advance. This fee applies to all requests for paper copies. (Example: If the request were for 51 pages, the charge would be \$10.20 and \$0.20 for each additional page.) If records exist in electronic form and the requestor prefers that format, the Department can copy the documents onto a CD or DVD. The Department shall make electronic records available in the format requested IF the requested format is one used by the Department to create copies for its own use or for other departments, and if the security or integrity of the original is not jeopardized or compromised. Different charges may apply to records in electronic form and we will inform you of those before they are incurred. You will need to pay either by check or money order made payable to "Department of Social Services-PRA Request" and send the payment to: Department of Social Services, Legal Division, ATTN: PRA Request, 744 P Street, MS 8-5-161, Sacramento, CA 95814 before the Department commences with work.

These guidelines shall be posted in a conspicuous place at every public counter in all Department of Social Services offices and a free copy shall be provided upon request.