

Guide to the Illinois FOIA Act

The [Illinois Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA) provides public access to government documents and records. The Illinois FOIA notes that it is "the public policy of the State of Illinois that all persons are entitled to full and complete information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts and policies of those who represent them as public officials and public employees consistent with the terms of this Act. Such access is necessary to enable the people to fulfill their duties of discussing public issues fully and freely, making informed political judgments and monitoring government to ensure that it is being conducted in the public interest."

The premise behind FOIA is that the public has a right to know what its government— all public bodies and its agencies — is doing.

Before making a request, first look to see if the information you are interested in is publicly available. You can find a lot of useful information on a range of topics on the county's website.

Is there a special form I have to use to make a FOIA request?

There is no specific form that must be used to make a request. The request simply must be in writing and reasonably describe the records you seek. If the information you want is not publicly available, you can send the request in writing to the department/official you are seeking information or use the FOIA portal for better convenience. [List of County FOIA officers.](#)

What can I ask for under the FOIA?

The law provides that a person can ask a public body for a copy of records on a specific subject and that public body must provide those records, unless there is an exemption in the statute that protects the records from disclosure.

You can also specify the format in which you wish to receive the records (for example, printed or electronic form). The FOIA does not require departments to create new records or to conduct research, analyze data, or answer questions when responding to requests.

Helpful [information](#) on complying with FOIA.

How long will it take before I get a response?

The response period for processing a FOIA does not start until a request is received by Madison County. The first day of the initial five-day period starts the day after a request is received during regular business hours.

Madison County has five (5) business (working) days for FOIA requests filed by non-commercial requestors. A response is due on the fifth day unless properly extended under 3(e) of the Act.

The response time may be extended for not more than five (5) additional days.

Under section 3.1(a) of the Act, commercial requests must be responded to within 21 working days.

All County Board department FOIA responses are logged on a [public portal](#) on the county's website. After being notified of availability, you may inspect responsive documents and download them.