

County of Cumberland Board of Chosen Freeholders	Policy Number: 4.08	Pages: 1 of 2
Chapter: General Procedures		Effective Date: June 22, 1995
Subject: Public Information Request		

I. POLICY:

Cumberland County Government shall comply with the common law right to know, the Open Public Meetings Act and the 1964 Right to Know Law which provides for the public's access to certain records.

The Cumberland County Board of Chosen Freeholders supports public participation in government and the need for an informed citizenry.

II. DEFINITIONS:

A. Public Information: (statutorily defined as) Any record required by law to be made, maintained or filed by any public agency or official is a public record except as exempted by action of any of the following: (a) New Jersey Statute; (b) a resolution of either house of the legislature; (c) Executive order of the Governor; (d) Court Rule; (e) Federal Statutes, regulation or order; (f) any state regulation promulgated pursuant to statute or executive order.

B. Access to Public Records:

It is not necessary to establish purpose for which access to public records is sought, once it is demonstrated that records sought are those defined by statute and are not otherwise protected, right to access is absolute.

C. Media:

Persons representing publications (newspapers, magazines), television or radio.

III. PROCEDURE:

A. Department heads shall:

1. Develop and implement a departmental policy which responds to requests from the public and media.

Policies shall:

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- a. Define what departmental information meets the definition of public information.
 - b. Outline the process by which requests for public information are made.
 - c. Identify staff who are authorized to respond to requests for information.
2. Answer requests for information within 10 working days of receiving said request.
 3. Refer disputes and/or questions regarding the determination of whether or not the requested information meets the definition of “public records” to the public information officer. (as a rule, when in doubt, make the referral.)
 4. Advise the public information officer and freeholder liaison of any and all requests from a member of the media for in person interviews or visits/tours of the department.
 5. Department heads are expected to be cooperative and responsive in their dealings with the news media and to answer routine questions to the best of their knowledge. Should a situation develop in which a department head becomes involved in a dispute with a member of the news media, the public information officer shall be advised immediately and will attempt to resolve the issue.

B. The Public Information Officer shall:

1. When requested, assist department heads in fulfilling a request for public information.
2. Respond to requests within ten (10) working days of receiving said request.
3. Refer questions regarding the determination of whether a document(s) meets the definition of public information to County Counsel.