FOIA Request SOP

HELPFUL INFORMATION

1. Different states may refer to these requests as different things, but are most commonly referred to as requests pursuant to OPRA (the Open Public Records Act) or FOIA (the Freedom of Information Act), or simply a Public Records Request. There are no significant differences in the terminologies. Throughout this training guide, it will be referred to as an "OPRA Request", but remember that they may be called different things.

2. Some states and agencies are more strict than others, while others are much more liberal. As you receive responses to your requests from various agencies, keep the information retained so that you know which areas are the easiest to get responsive and successful requests. Similarly, keep track of the states and agencies in which your requests go ignored or where the process is too cumbersome to effectively perform your tasks.

3. Anyone can make the requests, and in most states you can remain anonymous. If accurate, identify yourself as a journalist (independant or associated) or involved in media production. Doing so will help your request be successful, as one of the parameters of these types of requests is often to express the reason for your request. As a journalist or someone in the media, your reason is to promote transparency to the public and/or for potential news stories.

Step 1 :
The initial step in our process involves gathering information to request public records from various police departments. The provided Excel sheet is instrumental in this task and contains several important columns, including:

"Police Agency": Specifies the law enforcement agency from which we are requesting records.
"Report/Case/Booking Number": Identifies the specific report, case, or booking number relevant to our request.
"Date of Arrest/Booking": The date on which the arrest or booking occurred.
"Subject Age/Gender": Information about the age and gender of the individuals involved in the reports.

This information is crucial for accurately requesting the necessary public records. Please ensure you are familiar with the details in each column as they will guide our requests.

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Step 2:

Step-by-Step Guide to Find a FOIA Request Form or Contact Email for Any Police Agency

❖ Step 1: Identify the Police Agency
Start by determining the specific police agency you need information from, Verify the state & Name

In Case Of New Jersey(NJ) State, Skip To Step 4

❖ Step 2: Visit the Official Website
Use a search engine to find the official website of the police agency. Keywords like "[Police Agency Name] official website" should help.

❖ Step 3: Locate the FOIA or Public Records Section
Look for a section titled "Public Records," "FOIA," "Transparency," "Records," or something similar. This could be under menus like "About Us," "Services," "Resources," or "Contact Us."

❖ Step 4: Find the Request Form or Contact Information
In the FOIA or Public Records section, look for a downloadable request form or an online submission portal. If a form or portal is not available, look for contact information designated for public records requests, which may include an email address, phone number, or mailing address. (In most cases you'll find a portal)

In Case Of NJ There Is Central Port For Every Agency :- https://opramachine.com/

❖ Step 5: Review Submission Guidelines
Carefully read through any provided guidelines for submitting a FOIA request. This may include information on fees, identification needed, or specific details to include in your request.

❖ Step 6: Prepare Your Request
If you found a form, fill it out with all required details, such as the report/case number, date of arrest/booking, and subject details. If only contact information is available, prepare a clear and concise written request including all necessary information and any specific documents you are requesting.

❖ Step 7: Submit Your Request
Submit your completed form through the provided method (online, email, mail, etc.). If using email or mail, ensure your request is well-formatted and includes a subject line or heading that clearly indicates it's a FOIA/Public Records request.

❖ Step 8: Follow Up
Note any provided timelines for response and follow up if you do not receive acknowledgment of your request within that period. Some agencies provide tracking numbers or confirmation emails for requests.

Tips:

Be Specific: Clearly state what records you are requesting. The more specific, the easier it will be for the agency to fulfill your request.

Be Patient: Some agencies may take longer to respond, especially if the request is complex or requires review of many records.

Check for Online Databases: Some agencies have online databases for certain types of public records, which might allow you to access the information you need without a formal request.
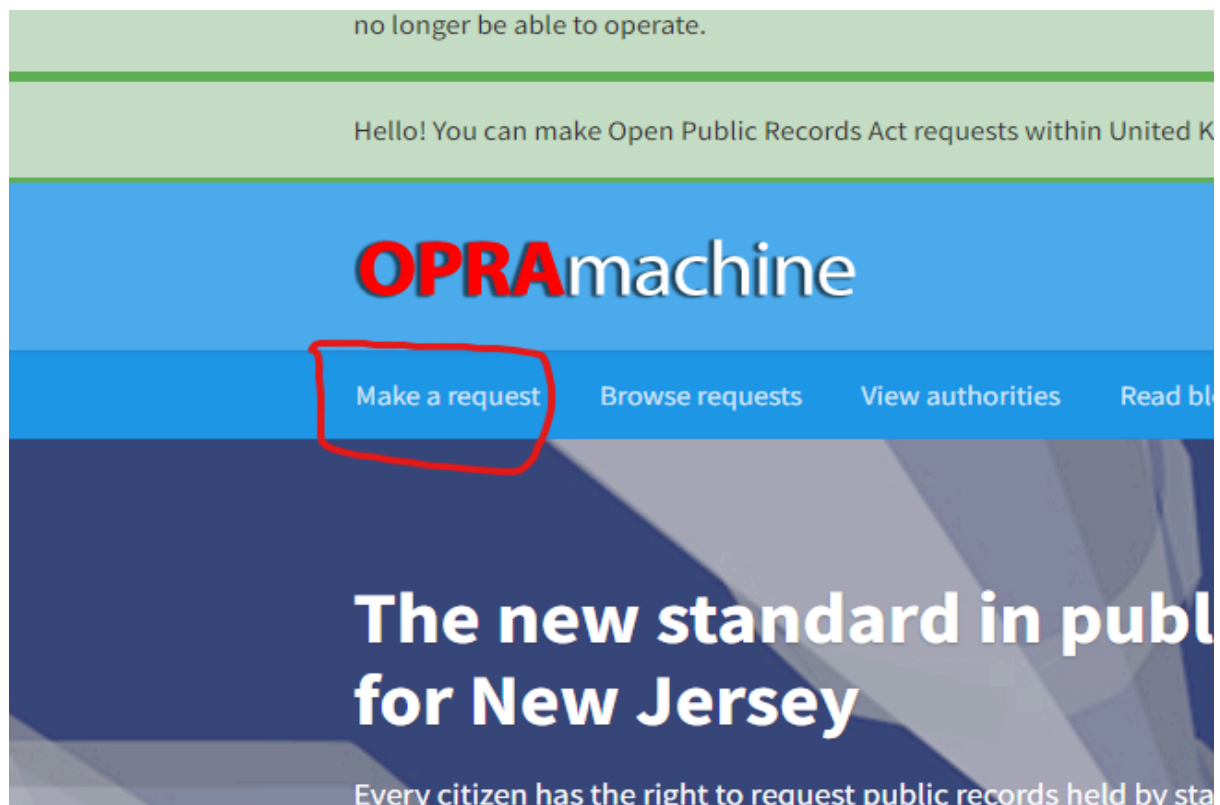
This guide aims to provide a general approach to finding and submitting a FOIA request to a police agency. Remember, the exact steps might vary depending on the specific agency and their procedures.

Step 3 :

If The State Is New Jersey

Step 3.1 :- Signup For Opramachine.com

Step 3.2 :- Click On Make A Request

Step 3.3 :- Find The Police department

Step 3.4 :- After Finalizing The PD Click On "Make Request"

Step 3.5 :- Fill The Forum

Summary

Arrest Reports Of Incident case # 23-7257, 23-7232

A one line summary of the information you are requesting, e.g. 'Crime statistics by ward level for Wales'

Your request

Dear Franklin Township,

This is a request for public records made under OPRA and the common law right of access. I am not required to fill out an official form. Please acknowledge receipt of this message.
Records requested:

Arrest Reports Of Incident case # 23-7257, 23-7232
Date :- 2/16/2023

Please include all available documents related to this incident, including but not limited to the arrest report, booking information, and any charges filed.
Respectfully Submitted
Sahil Bisht

Next Step: Preview your public request

Dear **{Police Department Name}**,

This is a request for public records made under OPRA and the common law right of access. I am not required to fill out an official form. Please acknowledge receipt of this message. Records requested:

Arrest Reports Of Incident case #
Date :-

Please include all available documents related to this incident, including but not limited to the arrest report, booking information, and any charges filed.

Respectfully Submitted
{Your Name}

In The Case Report/Case/Incident Number Is Not Available Use The Following Template :-

Dear Public Records Officer,

I am requesting a copy of the arrest report(s) for :-

Name :-
Gender :-
Age :-
Arrested For :-

Incident Date (Approx):-

Please include all available documents related to this incident, including but not limited to the arrest report, booking information, and any charges filed.

Respectfully Submitted
{Your Name}

Step 3.6 :- Publish The Report & Update It On The Clickup Data Base

"If a direct portal for requests is not available and you need to use email, simply fill out the templates provided in Step 3.5 "

Step 4 :- Updating The Database On Click Up

We gonna use clickup.com for our database,using ClickUp serves as an efficient way to manage, track, and update the status of each report request systematically.

First, you'll be assigned a "List" in which you will update all the report you have filled so far, its very important to keep track of all the requests and properly fill out the database with the right information

Example How A Normal "Report In Clickup" looks like

Nichole Smith, NM

sk

Task ∨ BCW-36

Amanda Nichole Smith, NM

⊚ Status	FILLED ▸ ✓		⅍ Assignees	Empty
⊟ Due Date	3 Apr		⚑ Priority	Empty
⏳ Time Estimate	Empty		⏱ Track Time	● 0:00:00
⬖ Tags	Empty			

Dear Public Records Officer,

I am requesting a copy of the arrest report(s) for :-

Name :- Amanda Nichole Smith ,female , Age Around 35-36
Arrested For :-
#1 Battery (household member)
#2 Violation of restraining order prohibiting domestic violence
#3 domestic-violence w/arrest

Date :- 02/18/2023

Please include all available documents related to this incident, including but not limited to the arrest report,
booking information, and any charges filed.

Respectfully Submitted
Sahil Bisht

Link/Source Of Incident :-

https://newmexico.arrests.org/Arrests/Amanda_Smith_55613875/

Link/Source Of Submission 🧑
https://nextrequest.cabq.gov/requests/24-3359

If Failed

Add Tag & Add Reason Here:-

Details   Subtasks   Action Items

Details **Subtasks** **Action Items**

Custom Fields

⊡ Via 🔖	Forum
⊡ Police Department 🔖	Albuquerque PD
⊡ State	New Mexico
$ Expense	–
🔗 Report File	–
🌐 Website	–

Hide 3 empty fields

Attachments

To Start, create the "task"
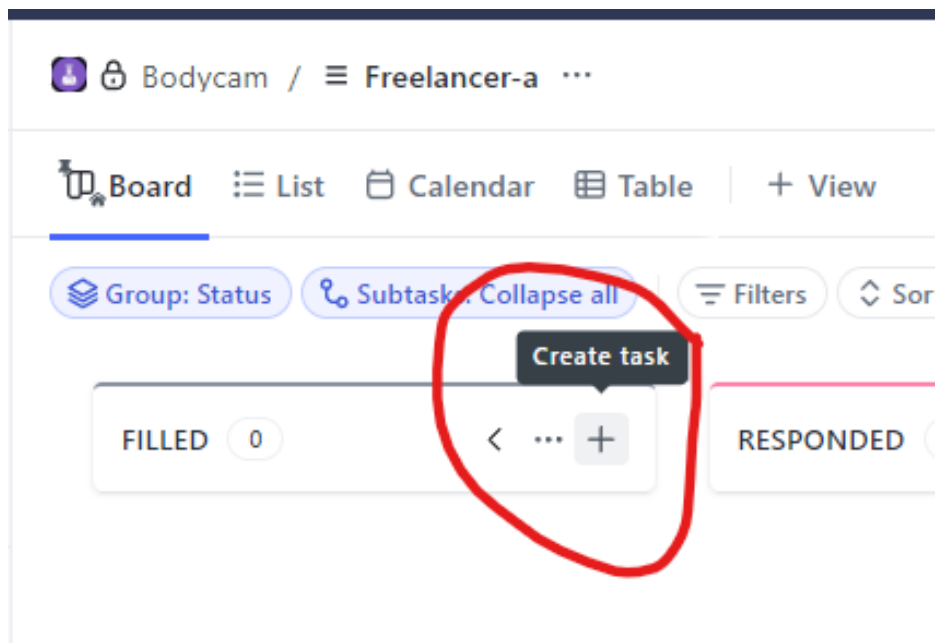
This Will Pop In Inside The Status "Filled"

Enter the case number or name of the suspect in the "task name" & Click "Save"

After this you need to fill the format, In **"Message Data"** ,
Put requested information you have provided in the FOIA Request

In "**Link/Source Of Incident"** Put Where you got the information, Eg Mugshots/news Or Excel Provided (copy paste the excel column)
Example:-

Link/Source Of Incident :-

⠿ **Excel Number** :- F23 (NJ 2020-24)

County	Agency Name	Officer Name	Report Number	Incident Case Number	Incident Date	Incident Municipality
Cumberland	Vineland PD	Adam Shaw	UOF23-2-31	23-7257, 23-7232	2/16/2023	Vineland, Cumberland County

"Link/source Of Submission" Enter the link of where you requested the report, eg opramachine link, Police department forum/email link (if its Email, Enter The Email)

Message Data

Link/Source Of Incident :-

Link/Source Of Submission :-

Now Let's Talk "Custom Fields"

Details   Subtasks   Action Items

Custom Fields   🔍 ↗ +

▣ Via ⚑	–
▣ Police Department ⚑	–
$ Expense	–
▣ State	–
⬭ Report File	–
⊕ Website	–

In
"Via" = Select "Forum/Email"
"**Police Department**" = Enter Or Select Which Police Department You Submitted The Req With
"Expense" = Enter How Much $$ PD Asking For
"State" = Enter Or Select The State You Submitted The Req
"Report File" = After You Got The Report File, Upload It In The Report File Section
"**Website**" = Enter The Website/Forum You Submitted The Req

Once You Recieved The Report, Update The Status To "**Responded**"

If Failed

Update The Status To "**Failed**", Add The Reason In The Description For Failed

Arrest #001

◎ Status   FILLED ▸ ✓

🗓 Due Date

⧗ Time Estimate

🏷 Tags

Search Statuses... ⚙

◉ FILLED ✓

◉ RESPONDED

◉ FAILED

✓ NO RESPONSE ⊘

✓ REQ BCF ⊘

◉ NOT INTERESTING ⊘

◉ BCF-INPROGRESS ⊘

✓ SUCCESS

Message Dat

Link/Source Of Incident :-

Tips & Notes :-

- Police Department Replies Usually Within 24-48Hours, Some Takes weeks, please be patient
- Updating Clickup With All The Information Is Mandatory
- Deleting Anything On Clickup Without Permission Is Strictly Not Allowed
- Professionally submitted request gets response faster
- Only Use Email Provided By Us