

Authorization for the Release of Records to Another Individual

In general, under the provisions of the FOIA and Privacy Act, access to information about private individuals cannot be given to unauthorized third parties without the individual's written consent. If you provide authorization, your request will be processed with the greatest possible access. If you do not or are unable to provide authorization, your request will be processed, but release of records will be severely restricted to protect the privacy of another individual.

What Is A Proper Authorization? (22 C.F.R. 171.12(a))

- Should be in writing
- Should be on plain paper or your letterhead (NOTE: do not use forms from other agencies, as they do not authorize the Department of State to release documents)
- Should authorize the Department of State to release documents concerning the individual to you
- Should be signed by the individuals who the documents are about
- Should contain either:
 1. A notarization from a notary public – which has the signature of the individual who is the subject of the records, the signature and seal of the notary, and be dated within six months of the request, or
 2. A statement from the individual who is the subject of the records saying: "I declare, certify, verify or state that, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, the foregoing is true and correct." This statement should be signed by the individual who the records are about, and be dated within six months of the date of the request.

Submitting the Authorization

The authorization(s) may be forwarded to us at: Office of Information Programs and Services, ATTN: A/GIS/IPS/RL, U.S. Department of State, SA-2, Washington, DC 20522-8100, or may be faxed to us at 202-261-8579. Please be sure to refer to your Case Control Number in your correspondence.

To ensure you receive the greatest possible access to documents, authorizations for all persons you are requesting records about **should be received by this office within 30 calendar days of the date of this letter**. If you are unable to provide an authorization, please notify us in writing. If proper authorizations are not received within **30 calendar days of the date of our letter**, your request will be processed accordingly and the release of documents will be severely restricted.

Documents about a Deceased Person

For deceased individuals, unless the death has been widely reported, please provide proof of death, e.g., a newspaper obituary or a copy of a death certificate, or advise us that none will be forthcoming.

PLEASE NOTE: Please submit a separate authorization for each person you are requesting records about. For example, **in cases involving an immigrant visa petitioner and one or more beneficiaries, please submit authorizations from the petitioner and all beneficiaries** .

An Example of a Proper Authorization

RE: Case Control Number _____

I, _____, authorize the Department of State to release all records about me to _____. I declare, certify, verify or state that, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, the foregoing is true and correct.

(signature)

(date)

How to Make a FOIA Request

STEP 1

Determine if the records you are seeking are with the Department of State.

The Department of State maintains records dealing with:

- The formulation and execution of U.S. Foreign policy
- The administration and operations of the Department of State and U.S. missions abroad
- Applications from U.S. citizens for U.S. Passports
- Visa requests from non-citizens to enter the U.S.
- Consular assistance given to U.S. citizens abroad
- Current and former employees of the Department of State

For more information on the organization and responsibility of the Department of State, go to [Department Organization](#).

For more information on the temporary and permanent records maintained by the Department of State, go to [Records Disposition Schedules](#).

In general, permanent records 25 years and older, pre-1925 passport and pre-1940 visa records are property of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For information on how to locate Department of State Records at the National Archives go to [State Department Records in the National Archives](#).

STEP 2

Determine whether the records you are seeking are available online.

Prior to making a request for Department of State records, you may wish to search for these records online by going to the Department of State's [Virtual Reading Room Documents Search](#) and [Administrative Rulings, Policy Statements, and Other Publications](#) pages.

The Department of State's search engine in the Virtual Reading Room Documents Search page will allow you to review thousands of documents by giving you control over how the information is organized.

The Administrative Rulings, Policy Statements, and Other Publications page contains copies of:

- a. "Final opinions [and] . . . orders" rendered in the adjudication of administrative cases
- b. Specific agency policy statements
- c. Certain administrative staff manuals
- d. As of March 31, 1997, records disclosed in response to a FOIA request that "the agency determines have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same records."

Various policy statements, guidelines, and manuals may be located on the websites of the offices and bureaus within the Department (see the [Alphabetical List of Bureaus and Offices](#)).

Department of State historical records can be found in the [Foreign Relations of the United States \(FRUS\) series](#).

STEP 3

Draft your request.

There are no special forms needed for making a request for Department of State Records but your request should include the following information:

- Your name, address, and daytime telephone number.
- As much information as you can provide so that the Department can locate the requested material, including the subject, timeframe, any individuals involved, and reasons why the Department is believed to have records on the subject. It may be helpful to view the Department's [Records Disposition Schedules](#).
- Determine your Fee Category and state the maximum amount of fees that you are willing to pay (please see the [Fees, Requester Categories, & Fee Waivers page](#) for more information). By making a FOIA request, you shall be considered to have agreed to pay all applicable fees up to \$25, unless otherwise noted.
- If you can demonstrate that a "compelling need" for the requested information exists, you may ask that your request be taken out of order and given expedited treatment (please see the [Expeditious Handling page](#) for more information).

Contracts

If you are requesting a copy of a Department of State contract, please provide us with as much information that you have to enable us to conduct an adequate search, such as contract or solicitation number, name of the company awarded the contract, approximate date of the contract, etc.

STEP 4

Send in your request to the Department of State.

You may mail or fax your request for Department of State records to the following:

Address

Office of Information Programs and Services
A/GIS/IPS/RL
U. S. Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20522-8100

Facsimile

(202) 261-8579

Please write "Freedom of Information Act" on the envelope or the subject line of your fax.

Electronic FOIA Request

If you are not seeking personal information about yourself or personal information on behalf of someone else, you may file a request by [Electronic Submission](#).

Please note: Requests for personal records cannot be accepted online.