

## § 5.1

### **Subpart B—Obtaining a Record**

- 5.21 How to request records.
- 5.22 Requests not handled under the FOIA.
- 5.23 Referral of requests outside the Department.
- 5.24 Responding to your request.

### **Subpart C—Release and Denial of Records**

- 5.31 Designation of authorized officials.
- 5.32 Release of records.
- 5.33 Denial of requests.
- 5.34 Appeal of denials.
- 5.35 Time limits.

### **Subpart D—Fees**

- 5.41 Fees to be charged—categories of requests.
- 5.42 Fees to be charged—general provisions.
- 5.43 Fee schedule.
- 5.44 Procedures for assessing and collecting fees.
- 5.45 Waiver or reduction of fees.

### **Subpart E—Records Available for Public Inspection**

- 5.51 Records available.
- 5.52 Indexes of records.

### **Subpart F—Reasons for Withholding Some Records**

- 5.61 General.
- 5.62 Exemption one: National defense and foreign policy.
- 5.63 Exemption two: Internal personnel rules and practices.
- 5.64 Exemption three: Records exempted by other statutes.
- 5.65 Exemption four: Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information.
- 5.66 Exemption five: Internal memoranda.
- 5.67 Exemption six: Clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.
- 5.68 Exemption seven: Law enforcement.
- 5.69 Exemptions 8 and 9: Records on financial institutions; records on wells.

AUTHORITY: 5 U.S.C. 552, 18 U.S.C. 1905, 31 U.S.C. 9701, 42 U.S.C. 1306(c), E.O. 12600.

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### **Subpart A—Basic Policy**

#### **§ 5.1 Purpose.**

This part contains the rules that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) follows in handling requests for records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). It describes how to make a FOIA request; who can

## **45 CFR Subtitle A (10-1-10 Edition)**

release records and who can decide not to release; how much time it should take to make a determination regarding release; what fees may be charged; what records are available for public inspection; why some records are not released; and your right to appeal and then go to court if we refuse to release records.

#### **§ 5.2 Policy.**

As a general policy, HHS follows a balanced approach in administering FOIA. We not only recognize the right of public access to information in the possession of the Department, but also protect the integrity of internal processes. In addition, we recognize the legitimate interests of organizations or persons who have submitted records to the Department or who would otherwise be affected by release of records. For example, we have no discretion to release certain records, such as trade secrets and confidential commercial information, prohibited from release by law. This policy calls for the fullest responsible disclosure consistent with those requirements of administrative necessity and confidentiality which are recognized in the Freedom of Information Act.

#### **§ 5.3 Scope.**

These rules apply to all components of the Department. Some units may establish additional rules because of unique program requirements, but such rules must be consistent with these rules and must have the concurrence of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. Existing implementing rules remain in effect to the extent that they are consistent with the new Departmental regulation. If additional rules are issued, they will be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, and you may get copies from our Freedom of information Officers.

#### **§ 5.4 Relationship between the FOIA and the Privacy Act of 1974.**

(a) *Coverage.* The FOIA and this rule apply to all HHS records. The Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. 552a, applies to records that are about individuals, but only if the records are in a system of records. “Individuals” and “system of records” are defined in the Privacy Act and in

**Department of Health and Human Services****§ 5.5**

our Privacy Act regulation, part 5b of this title.

(b) *Requesting your own records.* If you are an individual and request records, then to the extent you are requesting your own records in a system of records, we will handle your request under the Privacy Act and part 5b. If there is any record that we need not release to you under those provisions, we will also consider your request under the FOIA and this rule, and we will release the record to you if the FOIA requires it.

(c) *Requesting another individual's record.* Whether or not you are an individual, if you request records that are about an individual (other than yourself) and that are in a system of records, we will handle your request under the FOIA and this rule. (However, if our disclosure in response to your request would be permitted by the Privacy Act's disclosure provision, 5 U.S.C. 552a(b), for reasons other than the requirements of the FOIA, and if we decide to make the disclosure, then we will not handle your request under the FOIA and this rule. For example, when we make routine use disclosures pursuant to requests, we do not handle them under the FOIA and this rule. "Routine use" is defined in the Privacy Act and in part 5b). If we handle your request under the FOIA and this rule and the FOIA does not require releasing the record to you, then the Privacy Act may prohibit the release and remove our discretion to release.

**§ 5.5 Definitions.**

As used in this part,

*Agency* means any executive department, military department, government corporation, government controlled corporation, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Federal Government, or any independent regulatory agency. Thus, HHS is an agency. A private organization is not an agency even if it is performing work under contract with the Government or is receiving Federal financial assistance. Grantee and contractor records are not subject to the FOIA unless they are in the possession or under the control of HHS or its agents, such as Medicare health insurance carriers and intermediaries.

*Commercial use* means, when referring to a request, that the request is from or on behalf of one who seeks information for a use or purpose that furthers the commercial, trade, or profit interests of the requester or of a person on whose behalf the request is made. Whether a request is for a commercial use depends on the purpose of the request and the use to which the records will be put; the identity of the requester (individual, non-profit corporation, for-profit corporation), on the nature of the records, while in some cases indicative of that purpose or use, is not necessarily determinative. When a request is from a representative of the news media, a purpose or use supporting the requester's news dissemination function is not a commercial use.

*Department or HHS* means the Department of Health and Human Services. It includes Medicare health insurance carriers and intermediaries to the extent they are performing functions under agreements entered into under sections 1816 and 1842 of the Social Security Act, 42 U.S.C. 1395h, 1395u.

*Duplication* means the process of making a copy of a record and sending it to the requester, to the extent necessary to respond to the request. Such copies include paper copy, microform, audio-visual materials, and magnetic tapes, cards, and discs.

*Educational institution* means a preschool, elementary or secondary school, institution of undergraduate or graduate higher education, or institution of professional or vocational education, which operates a program of scholarly research.

*Freedom of Information Act or FOIA* means section 552 of Title 5, United States Code, as amended.

*Freedom of Information Officer* means an HHS official who has been delegated the authority to release or withhold records and assess, waive, or reduce fees in response to FOIA requests.

*Non-commercial scientific institution* means an institution that is not operated substantially for purposes of furthering its own or someone else's business, trade, or profit interests, and that is operated for purposes of conducting scientific research whose results are not intended to promote any particular product or industry.