

Office of Personnel Management

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Subpart A—Procedures for Disclosure of Records Under the Freedom of Information Act

SOURCE: 54 FR 25094, June 13, 1989, unless otherwise noted.

§ 294.101 Purpose.

This subpart contains the regulations of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552. Except as provided by § 294.105, OPM will use the provisions of this subpart to process all requests for records.

§ 294.102 General definitions.

All of the terms defined in the Freedom of Information Act, and the definitions included in the "Uniform Freedom of Information Act Fee Schedule and Guidelines" issued by the Office of Management and Budget apply, regardless of whether they are defined in this subpart.

Direct costs means the expenditures that an agency actually incurs in searching for, duplicating, and reviewing documents to respond to an FOIA

request. Overhead expenses (such as the cost of space, and heating or lighting the facility in which the records are stored), are not included in direct costs.

Disclose or disclosure means making records available, on request, for examination and copying, or furnishing a copy of records.

Duplication means the process of making a copy of a document necessary to respond to an FOIA request. Among the forms that such copies can take are paper, microform, audiovisual materials, or machine readable documentation (e.g., magnetic tape or disk).

Records, information, document, and material have the same meaning as the term *agency records* in section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

Review means the process of initially examining documents located in response to a request to determine whether any portion of any document located may be withheld. It also includes processing documents for disclosure; e.g., doing all that is necessary to excise them and otherwise prepare them for release. Review does not include time spent resolving general legal and policy issues regarding the application of exemptions.

Search means the time spent looking for material that is responsive to a request, including page-by-page or line-by-line identification of material within documents.

[54 FR 25094, June 13, 1989, as amended at 58 FR 32043, June 8, 1993]

§ 294.103 Definitions of categories and assignment of requests and requesters to categories.

OPM will apply the definitions and procedures contained in this section to assign requesters to categories. The four categories established by 5 U.S.C. 552(a) are requests for commercial use, requests for non-commercial use made by educational or non-commercial scientific institutions, requests for non-commercial use made by representatives of the news media, and all others.

(a) *Request for commercial use.* A "commercial use 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

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the requester or the person or institution on whose behalf the request is made. In determining whether a request properly belongs in this category, OPM will look first to the intended use of the documents being requested.

(b) *Request for non-commercial use made by an educational or non-commercial scientific institution.* OPM will include requesters in one of the two categories described in paragraphs (b) (1) and (2) of this section when the request is being made as authorized by, and under the auspices of, a qualifying institution; and the records are sought, not for a commercial use, but in furtherance of scholarly or scientific research.

(1) *Educational institution* refers to any public or private, preschool, elementary, or secondary school, institution of undergraduate or graduate higher education, or institution of professional or vocational education, which operates a program or programs of scholarly or scientific research.

(2) A *non-commercial scientific institution* refers to an institution that is not operated on a *commercial* basis as that term is referenced in paragraph (a) of this section, and which is operated solely to conduct scientific or scholarly research, the results of which are not intended to promote any particular product or industry.

(c) *Request from a representative of the news media.* “Representative of the news media” refers to any person actively gathering news for an entity that is organized and operated to publish, broadcast, or otherwise disseminate news to the public. The term “news” means information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public. Examples of news media entities include television or radio stations broadcasting to the public at large, and publishers of periodicals who make their products available for purchase or subscription by the general public. Free-lance journalists may be regarded as representatives of the news media if they demonstrate a solid basis for expecting publication, or some other form of dissemination, through a particular organization even though they are not actually employed by it. OPM will assign

news media officials to this category only when a request is not for commercial use. If a person meets the other qualifications for inclusion, OPM will not apply the term “commercial use” to his or her request for records in support of a news dissemination function.

(d) *Requests from others.* The category “all others,” consists of any requesters not covered by paragraphs (a), (b), or (c) of this section. However, as provided by § 294.105, OPM will use its Privacy Act regulations, rather than this subpart, when individuals ask for records about themselves that may be filed in OPM systems of records.

§ 294.104 Clarifying a requester’s category.

(a) *Seeking clarification of a requester’s category.* OPM may seek additional clarification before assigning a person to a specific category if—

(1) There is reasonable cause to doubt the requester’s intended use of records; or

(2) The intended use is not clear from the request itself; or

(3) There is any other reasonable doubt about qualifications that may affect the fees applicable or the services rendered under § 294.109.

(b) *Prompt notification to requester.* When OPM seeks clarification as provided by paragraph (a) of this section, it will provide prompt notification either by telephone or in writing of the information or materials needed.

(c) *Effect of seeking clarification on time limits for responding.* When applying the time limits in section 552 of title 5, United States Code, OPM will not officially consider any request for records as being received until the official who is assigned responsibility for making a decision on releasing the records has received any additional clarification sought under paragraphs (a) and (b) of this section; and has determined that the clarifying information is sufficient to correctly place the requester in one of the categories prescribed in this section. If the requested clarifying information is not received within a reasonable time, OPM will,