

Erie County Health Department

Public Records Policy

Effective November 1, 2007

Introduction:

It is the policy of the Erie County Board of Health that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of the Erie County Board of Health to strictly adhere to the state's Public Records Act. All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request is in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

Section 1 – Public Records:

This office, in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, defines records as including the following: Any document – paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, e-mail), or other format – that is created or received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of Erie County Board of Health are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

Section 1.1:

It is the policy of the Erie County Board of Health that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying (See Section 4 for the email record policy). Record retention schedules are to be updated regularly and posted prominently.

Section 2 – Record Requests:

Each request for public records should be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

Section 2.1:

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the public office to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the records custodian must contact the requester for clarification, and should assist the requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the office keeps its records.

Section 2.2:

The requestor does not have to put a records request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identify or the intended use of the requested public record. It is this office's general policy that this information is not to be requested.

Section 2.3:

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours. Public records must be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records must be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

Section 2.4:

Each request should be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records should be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. Routine requests include, but are not limited to, meeting minutes (both in draft and final form), budgets, salary information, forms and applications, personnel rosters, etc. If fewer than 20 pages of copies are requested or if the records are readily available in an electronic format that can be e-mailed or downloaded easily, these should be made as quickly as the equipment allows.

(If more copies are requested, an appointment should be made with the requester on when the copies or computer files can be picked up.)

All requests for public records must either be satisfied (see Section 2.4) or be acknowledged in writing by the Erie County Board of Health within three business

days following the office's receipt of the request. If a request is deemed significantly beyond "routine," such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement must include the following:

Section 2.4a:

An estimated number of business days it will take to satisfy the request.

Section 2.4b:

An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4c:

Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

Section 2.5:

Any denial of public records requested must include an explanation, including legal authority. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions are to be redacted and the rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction must be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

Section 3 – Costs for Public Records:

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies.

Section 3.1:

The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page.

Section 3.2:

The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1 per disc.

Section 3.3:

There is no charge for documents emailed.

Section 3.4:

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

Public Records Request Action Form

Date _____ Time _____ AM PM

Written Request

Verbal Request

Is request to inspect and review records onsite? Yes No

Is request for duplication of records to be mailed or picked up by requester? _____

Records retention schedules are posted prominently.

Record Request Response: The Erie County Health Department may request more specific language required to fulfill the request for records. If it is unclear what records are being sought, the ECHD Public Records Policy Officer or his designee must contact the requester for clarification and will assist the revision request.

Verbal Request: The Erie County Health Department Public Records Officer or his designee will record verbal request verbatim and shall read the request back to requester to assure accuracy.

Estimated length of time to gather records to fulfill request _____

Request satisfied or acknowledged in writing within three business days? Yes No

If request is voluminous than that estimated time to satisfy the request will be given.

Estimated cost of copies is _____ Postage _____

Exempt items from records include: _____

Explanation: _____

Redactions: Yes No

Request Satisfied: Date: _____ Time: _____

Filed into Public Records Policy binder ? Yes No

Public Records Officer or Designee Signature

Date