

PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY FOR THE OFFICE OF THE CRIMINAL COURT CLERK

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Pursuant to T.C.A. §10-7-503(g), the following Public Records Policy for the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** is hereby adopted by the Criminal Court Clerk to provide economical and efficient access to public records as provided under the Tennessee Public Records Act ("**TPRA**") in T.C.A. §10-7-501, et seq.

The **TPRA** provides that all state, county and municipal records shall, at all times during business hours, which for public hospitals shall be during the business hours of their administrative Office, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of this state, and those in charge of the records shall not refuse such right of inspection to any citizen, unless otherwise provided by state law. See T.C.A. §10-7-503(a)(2)(A). Accordingly, the public records of the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.

Personnel of the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** shall timely and efficiently provide access and assistance to persons requesting to view or receive copies of public records. No provisions of this Policy shall be used to hinder access to open public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records, as well as the efficient and safe operation of the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** shall be protected as provided by current law. Concerns about this Policy should be addressed to the Public Records Request Coordinator for the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** or to the Tennessee Office of Open Records Counsel ("**OORC**").

Routine public record requests for documents filed within the ordinary course of business may be requested directly to the Office of the Criminal Court Clerk and fulfilled immediately without going through the process described in this policy. This policy is posted online at ccc.nashville.gov. A copy of this policy may be requested at the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk**. The Criminal Court Clerk is responsible for:

- (1) Preserving the confidentiality of a public record or information in a public record that is confidential under the Tennessee Public Records Act (T.C.A. §10-7-504 et seq., as the same may be hereafter amended), or other law.
- (2) Protecting public records from damage or disorganization.
- (3) Making public records not exempt from disclosure and in the Department's custody available for inspection during normal business hours unless a state law provides otherwise.

I. Definitions:

- A. ***Confidential Record***: Any record, or part of a record, which is defined by the **TPRA**, or other state or federal law, as being exempt from public inspection, including, but not limited to, those records listed in T.C.A. §10-7-504.

- B. Records Custodian: The office, official or employee lawfully responsible for the direct custody and care of a public record. See §T.C.A. 10-7-503(a)(1)(C). The Records Custodian is not necessarily the original preparer or receiver of the record.
- C. Public Records: All documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any governmental agency. See T.C.A. §10-7-503(a)(1)(A).
- D. Public Records Request Coordinator: The individual, or individuals, designated in Section III, A.3 of this Policy who has, or have, the responsibility to ensure public record requests are routed to the appropriate Records Custodian and are fulfilled in accordance with the **TPRA**. See T.C.A. §10-7-503(a)(1)(B). The Public Records Request Coordinator may also be a Records Custodian.
- E. Requestor: A person seeking access to a public record, whether it is for inspection or duplication.

II. Requesting Access to Public Records

- A. Public record requests shall be made to the Public Records Request Coordinator(s) ("**PRRC**"), in order to ensure public record requests are fulfilled in a timely manner.
- B. Requests for inspection may be made orally or in writing using the *Office of the Criminal Court Clerk Public Records Request Form* at the **PRRC** or Departmental mailing address(es) listed below. If the requestor desires responses or written communications from the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** to be sent to a preferred mailing or email address, these addresses must be provided by the requestor. If the requestor does not provide a preferred mailing or email address, then any requests for clarification, responses, or other written communication required by the **TPRA** in response to requests for inspection only will be sent to the mailing address shown on the proof of Tennessee citizenship submitted by the requestor.
- C. Requests for copies, or requests for inspection and copies, may be made orally to the phone number(s) listed below or in writing using the *Office of the Criminal Court Clerk Public Records Request Form* at the **PRRC** or Departmental mailing address(es) listed below.
- D. Proof of Tennessee citizenship by presentation of a valid Tennessee driver's license (or alternative acceptable form of ID) is required as a condition to inspect or receive copies of public records.

III. Responding to Public Records Requests

- A. Public Record Request Coordinator
 1. The **PRRC** shall review public record requests and make an initial determination of the following:
 - a. If the requestor provided evidence of Tennessee citizenship;
 - b. If the records requested are described with sufficient specificity to identify them; and
 - c. If the Office of the Criminal Court Clerk is the custodian of the records.

2. The **PRRC** shall acknowledge receipt of the request and take any of the following appropriate action(s):
 - a. Advise the requestor of this Policy and the elections made regarding:
 - i. Proof of Tennessee citizenship;
 - ii. Form(s) required for copies;
 - iii. Fees
 - b. If appropriate, deny the request in writing, providing the appropriate ground such as one of the following:
 - i. The requestor is not, or has not presented evidence of being, a Tennessee citizen.
 - ii. The request lacks specificity, if it can't be determined by the **PRRC**.
 - iii. An exemption makes the record not subject to disclosure under the **TPRA**. **PRRC** will provide the exemption in written denial.
 - iv. The Criminal Court Clerk is not the custodian of the requested records.
 - v. The record(s) do(es) not exist.
 - c. If appropriate, contact the requestor to see if request can be narrowed.
 - d. Ensure the records request is completed.
 - e. If requested records are in the custody of a different governmental entity, and the **PRRC** knows the correct governmental entity, advise the requestor of the correct governmental entity and **PRRC** for that entity if known.

3. The **PRRC** for the Office of the Criminal Court Clerk shall be the Chief Deputy Clerk. The designated PRRC is:
 - a. Julius Sloss, Chief Deputy Clerk
 - b. Contact information:

Julius Sloss
Office of the Criminal Court Clerk
Justice A.A. Birch Building
408 2nd Avenue North, Suite 2120
Nashville, TN 37201
Office: 615-862-5663
 - c. In the event that you receive and "Out of Office Notice" for the PRRC, the alternate PRRC(s) are:

Jason Garrett
Director of State Trial Courts
Office of the Criminal Court Clerk
Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County
Office: 615-862-5624

B. Records Custodian

1. Upon receiving a public records request, a Records Custodian shall promptly make requested public records available in accordance with T.C.A. §10-7-503. If the Records Custodian is uncertain that an applicable exemption applies, the Custodian may consult with the **PRRC**, Metro Legal/Counsel, or the **OORC**.

2. If not practicable to promptly provide requested records because additional time is necessary to determine whether the requested records exist; to search for, retrieve, or otherwise gain access to records; to determine whether the records are open; to redact records; or for other similar reasons, then a Records Custodian or **PRRC** shall, within seven (7) business days from the Records Custodian's receipt of the request, send the requestor a completed *Public Records Request Response Form* which is attached, based on the form developed by the **OORC**.
3. If a Records Custodian denies a public record request, he or she shall deny the request in writing as provided in Section III.A.2.b using the *Public Records Request Response Form*.
4. If a Records Custodian reasonably determines production of records should be segmented because the records request is for a large volume of records, or additional time is necessary to prepare the records for access, the Records Custodian or **PRRC** shall use the *Public Records Request Response Form* to notify the requestor that production of the records will be in segments and that a records production schedule will be provided as expeditiously as practicable. If appropriate, the Records Custodian or **PRRC** should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.
5. If a Records Custodian discovers records, in response to a records request, were omitted, the Records Custodian or **PRRC** should contact the requestor concerning the omission and produce the records as quickly as practicable.

C. Redaction

1. If a record contains confidential information or information that is not open for public inspection, the Records Custodian shall prepare a redacted copy prior to providing access. If questions arise concerning redaction, the Records Custodian should coordinate with Metro Legal/Counsel or other appropriate parties regarding review and redaction of records.
2. Whenever requested by a requestor, a Records Custodian should provide the requestor with a general statement of the basis for redaction(s) within the records provided. The basis given for redactions shall be general in nature and not disclose confidential information.

IV. **Inspection of Records**

- A. There shall be no charge for inspection of open public records unless otherwise provided for under state or federal law.
- B. The location for inspection of records within the **Office of the Criminal Court Clerk** should be determined by either the **PRRC** or the Records Custodian who will advise the requestor of the location where these records can be inspected.
- C. The **PRRC** or a Records Custodian may require an appointment for inspection of records during normal business hours and at a mutually agreeable time for the requestor or may require inspection of records at an alternate location.

V. Copies of Records

- A. A Records Custodian shall promptly respond to a public record request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.
- B. At the discretion of the Records Custodian or **PRRC**, as applicable, and where possible, the responsive records may be emailed to the requestor.
- C. For copies to be picked up, upon payment, the copies will be available for pickup at a location specified by the Records Custodian.
- D. For copies to be delivered by mail or by courier service, upon pre-payment for postage/courier services and copies, copies will be delivered to the requestor's home address by the United States Postal Service or by pre-paid courier service. Additional permitted means of delivery may be utilized at the discretion of the **PRRC** or Records Custodian, as appropriate.
- E. A requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment.

VI. Fees and Charges and Procedures for Billing and Payment

- A. Fees and charges for copies are as follows:
 - 1. \$0.50 per page in accordance with T.C.A. §8-21-401(i)(4).
 - 2. \$5.00 certification per document in accordance with T.C.A. §8-21-401(i)(5) (in addition to copy charge by page).
 - 3. Actual costs assessed by any outside vendor used.
- B. A requestor may be charged for employee labor that is reasonably necessary to produce the requested copy when the labor time exceeds one (1) hour. Costs are charged based on the hourly wage (not including benefits) of the employee(s). For salaried employees, the hourly wage is determined by dividing the employee's annual salary by the required hours to be worked per year.
- C. Payment in advance will be required, either by cash, credit/debit card, or money order payable to the Office of the Criminal Court Clerk.

OFFICE OF THE CRIMINAL COURT CLERK

Public Records Request Form

The Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) grants Tennessee citizens the right to access open public records that exist at the time of the request. The TPRA does not require Records Custodians to compile information or create or recreate records that do not exist.

To: **Public Records Requestor Coordinator**

Requestor First Name: _____

Requestor Last Name: _____

Requestor Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Is the requestor a Tennessee citizen? Yes No

Proof of Tennessee residency/citizenship is required. Requestor must supply a copy of Tennessee driver's license, Tennessee issued state ID, current utility bill, mortgage/lease paperwork showing requestor's name and address.

Request: **Inspection** (the *TPRA* does not permit fees or require a written request for inspection only.¹)

Copy/Duplicate

If costs for copies are assessed, the requestor has a right to receive an estimate. Do you wish to waive your right to an estimate and agree to pay copying and duplication costs in an amount not to exceed \$_____? If so, *initial* here: _____.

Delivery preference: **On-Site Pick-Up**

USPS First-Class Mail

Electronic

Other: _____

Records Requested:

Provide a detailed description of the record(s) requested, including: (1) type of record; (2) timeframe or dates for the records sought; and (3) subject matter or key words related to the records. Under the *TPRA*, record requests must be sufficiently detailed to enable a governmental entity to identify the specific records sought. As such, your record request must provide enough detail to enable the Records Custodian responding to the request to identify the specific records you are seeking:

Signature of Requestor

Signature of Public Records Request Coordinator

Date Submitted:

Date Received:

¹ **NOTE:** T.C.A. §10-7-504(a)(20)(C) permits charging for redaction of private records of a utility.