

## REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

The Dickenson County School Board complies with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Except as otherwise specifically provided by law, all public records are open to citizens of the Commonwealth, representatives of newspapers and magazines with circulation in the Commonwealth and representatives of radio and television stations broadcasting in or into the Commonwealth during the regular office hours of the custodian of such records. All requests for information are processed in accordance with KBA-R Requests for Public Records.

Officers, employees, and members of the School Board who fail to provide public records as required by FOIA because they altered or destroyed the requested records with the intent to avoid the provisions of FOIA are subject to penalties in their individual capacity of up to \$100 per record altered or destroyed.

The name(s) and contact information for the person(s) the Dickenson County School Board has designated as its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer(s) is listed in regulation KBA-R Requests for Public Records and posted at the school board office and on the division's website. The FOIA Officer(s) serve(s) as a point of contact for members of the public in requesting public records and coordinate(s) the school board's compliance with FOIA. The FOIA officer(s) receive(s) training at least once during each consecutive period of two calendar years beginning on the date on which the FOIA Officer last completed a training session by the school board's legal counsel or the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council.

Adopted: April 17, 2002

Revised: June 22, 2016

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Revised: June 26, 2019

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Cross Ref.: KBA-R Requests for Public Records

## **Rights & Responsibilities**

### **The Rights of Requestors and the Responsibilities of Dickenson County Public Schools under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act**

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), located at § 2.2-3700 et seq. of the Code of Virginia, guarantees citizens of the Commonwealth and representatives of the media access to public records held by public bodies, public officials and public employees.

A public record is any writing or recording – regardless of whether it is a paper record, an electronic file, an audio or video recording or record in any other format – that is prepared or owned by, or in the possession of a public body or its officers, employees or agents in the transaction of public business. All public records are presumed to be open to the public and may only be withheld if a specific statutory exemption applies.

The policy of FOIA is to promote an increased awareness by all persons of governmental activities. In furthering this policy, FOIA requires that the law be interpreted liberally, in favor of access, and that any exemption allowing public records to be withheld must be interpreted narrowly.

### **FOIA Rights**

- A citizen of the Commonwealth has the right to request to inspect or receive copies of public records, or both.
- A citizen of the Commonwealth has the right to request that any charges for the requested records be estimated in advance.
- If a citizen of the Commonwealth believes that their FOIA rights have been violated, the citizen may file a petition in district or circuit court to compel compliance with FOIA. Alternatively, they may contact the FOIA Council for a nonbinding advisory opinion.

### **Making a Request for Records from Dickenson County Public Schools**

- A citizen of the Commonwealth may request records by U.S. Mail, fax, e-mail, in person or over the phone. FOIA does not require that a request be in writing, nor that it specifically state that records are being requested under FOIA.
- As a practical matter, it may be helpful to both the requestor and the person receiving the request to put the request in writing. This creates a record of the request. It also gives us a clear statement of what records are requested, so that there is no misunderstanding over a verbal request. However, we cannot refuse to respond to a FOIA request if it is not put in writing.
- A request must identify the records sought with “reasonable specificity.” This is a common-sense standard. It does not refer to or limit the volume or number of records requested; instead, it requires the requestor to be specific enough so that we can identify and locate the records that are requested.

- A request must ask for existing records or documents. FOIA creates a right to inspect or copy records; it does not apply to general questions about the work of Dickenson County Public Schools, nor does it require Dickenson County Public Schools to create a record that does not exist.
- A requestor may choose to receive electronic records in any format used by Dickenson County Public Schools in the regular course of business. For example, if requested records are maintained in an Excel file, the requestor you may elect to receive those records electronically, via e-mail or on a computer disk or to receive a printed copy of those records.
- If we have questions about a request, please cooperate with staff's efforts to clarify the type of records sought, or to attempt to reach a reasonable agreement about a response to a large request. Making a FOIA request is not an adversarial process, but we may need to discuss a request to ensure that we understand what records are being sought.

**To request records from Dickenson County Public Schools, direct your request to Dickenson County Public Schools' designated Freedom of Information Act Officer (FOIA Officer) who is responsible for serving as a point of contact for members of the public who wish to request public records. The Dickenson County Public Schools FOIA Officers are:**

Mike Setser, Supervisor of Compliance, and Tonya Baker, Dickenson County School Board Clerk, P.O. Box 1127, Clintwood, VA 24228. Phone: 276-926-4643

In addition, the FOIA Advisory Council is available to answer questions about FOIA. The Council may be contacted by e-mail at [foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:foiacouncil@dls.virginia.gov) or by phone at (804) 225-3056 or 1-866-448-4100.

### **Dickenson County Public Schools' Responsibilities in Responding to Your Request**

Dickenson County Public Schools must respond to a request within five working days of receiving it. "Day One" is considered the day after the request is received. The 5-day period does not include weekends or holidays.

The reason behind a request for public records from Dickenson County Public Schools is irrelevant and a requestor does not have to state why they want the records before we respond to the request. FOIA does, however, allow Dickenson County Public Schools to require a requestor to provide their name and legal address.

FOIA requires that Dickenson County Public Schools make one of the following responses to a request within the 5-day time period:

1. We provide the records requested in their entirety.
2. We withhold all of the records requested, because all of the records are subject to a specific statutory exemption or exemptions. If all of the records are being

withheld, we must send a response in writing. That writing must identify the volume and subject matter of the records withheld and state the specific section(s) of the Code of Virginia that allows us to withhold the records.

3. We provide some of the records requested, but withhold other records. We cannot withhold an entire record if only a portion of it is subject to an exemption. In that instance, we may redact the portion of the record that may be withheld, and must provide the remainder of the record. We must provide the requestor a written response stating the specific section(s) of the Code of Virginia that allows portions of the requested records to be withheld.
4. We inform the requestor in writing that the requested records cannot be found or do not exist (we do not have the records requested). However, if we know that another public body has the requested records, we must include contact information for the other public body in our response.
5. If it is practically impossible for Dickenson County Public Schools to respond to the request within the 5-day period, we must state this in writing, explaining the conditions that make the response impossible. This will allow us 7 additional working days to respond to the request, giving us a total of 12 working days to respond to the request.

If a request is made for a very large number of records and we feel that we cannot provide the records within 12 working days without disrupting our other organizational responsibilities, we may petition the court for additional time to respond to the request. However, FOIA requires that we make a reasonable effort to reach an agreement with the requestor concerning the production of the records before we go to court to ask for more time.

### **Costs**

Dickenson County Public Schools may make reasonable charges not to exceed its actual cost incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying or searching for the requested records. Dickenson County Public Schools will not impose any extraneous, intermediary or surplus fees or expenses to recoup the general costs associated with creating or maintaining records or transacting the general business of the schools. Any duplicating fee charged by Dickenson County Public Schools will not exceed the actual cost of duplication. All charges for the supplying of requested records shall be estimated in advance at the request of the requestor as set forth in subsection Va. Code § 2.2-3704.F.

The requestor may have to pay for the records requested from the Dickenson County Public Schools. FOIA allows us to charge for the actual costs of responding to FOIA requests. This includes items like staff time spent searching for the requested records, copying costs or any other costs directly related to supplying the requested records. It does not include general overhead costs.

If we estimate that it will cost more than \$200 to respond to a request, we may require the requestor to pay a deposit, not to exceed the amount of the estimate, before

proceeding with the request. The five days that we have to respond to the request does not include the time between when we ask for a deposit and when the requestor responds.

A requestor may request that we estimate in advance the charges for supplying the records requested. This will allow the requestor to know about any costs upfront, or give the requestor the opportunity to modify the request in an attempt to lower the estimated costs.

If a requestor owes us money from a previous FOIA request that has remained unpaid for more than 30 days, Dickenson County Public Schools may require payment of the past-due bill before it will respond to a new FOIA request.

### **Types of Records**

The following is a general description of the types of records held by Dickenson County Public Schools:

- Personnel records concerning employees and officials of Dickenson County Public Schools
- Scholastic records
- Business and finance records
- Operational records involving support departments such as Technology, Transportation, Facilities, Food Services, etc.
- Agendas, minutes and other records of the meetings of the School Board and committees appointed by the School Board (which are also available on the Dickenson County Public Schools website at <http://www.dickenson.k12.va.us/home> )
- Records of contracts to which Dickenson County Public Schools is a party

### **Commonly Used Exemptions**

The Code of Virginia allows any public body to withhold certain records from public disclosure. Dickenson County Public Schools commonly withholds records subject to the following exemptions:

- Personnel records (§ 2.2-3705.1 (1) of the Code of Virginia)
- Records subject to attorney-client privilege (§ 2.2-3705.1 (2)) or attorney work product (§ 2.2-3705.1 (3))
- Vendor proprietary information (§ 2.2-3705.1 (6))
- Records relating to the negotiation and award of a contract, prior to a contract being awarded (§ 2.2-3705.1 (12))
- Records related to critical incident response (§ 2.2-3705.2 (14))
- Scholastic records (§ 2.2-3705.4(1) and 20 U.S.C. § 1232g)

### **Policy Regarding the Use of Exemptions**

The general policy of Dickenson County Public Schools is to invoke the personnel records exemption in those instances where it applies in order to protect the privacy of employees and officials of Dickenson County Public Schools.

The general policy of Dickenson County Public Schools is to invoke the contract negotiations exemption whenever it applies in order to protect Dickenson County Public Schools bargaining position and negotiating strategy.

The general policy of Dickenson County Public Schools is to invoke the scholastic records exemption in those instances where it applies in order to protect the privacy of students and comply with other state and federal laws governing the privacy of student records.

Adopted: June 28, 2017  
Revised: February 27, 2020

## REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

Dickenson County School Board is committed to full compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and processes all requests for public records in accordance with the following procedures.

Mike Setser, Supervisor of Compliance, and Tonya Baker, Dickenson County School Board Clerk are Dickenson County School Board's FOIA Officer(s). The FOIA Officer(s) serve(s) as a point of contact for members of the public in requesting public records and coordinate(s) the school board's compliance with FOIA. The FOIA Officers may be reached at PO Box 1127, 309 Volunteer Avenue, Clintwood, VA 24228, or (276) 926-4643.

### Access to Records

1. When practicable, the following records are available on request at the central office:
  - Most recent School Board meeting minutes.
  - List of personnel.
2. Unless otherwise specified by the FOIA Officer, inspection of records takes place at the central office of Dickenson County School Board during its regular office hours and records are not removed from that site. Copies may be requested in lieu of or at the time of inspection, subject to the charges listed below. Nonexempt records maintained in an electronic database are produced in any tangible medium or format identified by the requester that is regularly used in the ordinary course of business by Dickenson County School Board, including posting the records on a website or delivering the records through an electronic mail address provided by the requester.
3. Requesters must provide their legal name and address and verification that the requester is a citizen of the Commonwealth, a representative of a newspaper or magazine with circulation in the Commonwealth, or a representative of a radio or television station broadcasting in or into the Commonwealth.
4. The FOIA Officer or designee is present during inspection or copying of records. A record of each inspection is made, using form KBA-F2 Record of Inspection and/or Delivery of Copies.

### Request Procedures

1. Requests for access to records shall be made with reasonable specificity.
2. Requests shall be directed to the Dickenson County Public Schools FOIA Officers at: PO Box 1127, Clintwood, VA 24228, Phone: (276) 926-4643, Fax: (276) 926-6374.
3. Requesters should make their requests using Form KBA-F1 Request for Public Records. Requests received via telephone are transcribed onto Form KBA-F1 Request for Public Records by school board staff. Written requests other than on Form KBA-F1 Request for Public Records are appended to a copy of the form by staff, who fill out as much of the form as possible.
4. School board staff provide Form KBA-F1 Request for Public Records and a copy of this regulation upon request to any person interested in obtaining access to records,

and shall instruct the requester to direct the request to the FOIA Officer. Telephone inquiries are redirected to the FOIA Officer. Any written requests received by building personnel are immediately forwarded to the FOIA Officer with a notation indicating the date and time the request was received.

### **Responding to Requests**

1. Promptly, but in all cases within five working days of receiving the request, the school division provides the requested records to the requester or makes one of the following responses in writing:
  - (a) The requested records are being entirely withheld. The response will identify with reasonable particularity the volume and subject matter of the withheld records, and, with respect to each category of withheld records, cite the specific Virginia Code section(s) or other law that authorizes the withholding of the records.
  - (b) The requested records are being provided in part and are being withheld in part. The response will identify with reasonable particularity the subject matter of the withheld portions and cite, with respect to each category of withheld records, the specific Virginia Code section(s) or other law which authorizes the withholding of the records.
  - (c) The requested records could not be found or do not exist. If the school division knows that another public body has the requested records, the response includes contact information for the other public body.
  - (d) It is not practically possible to provide the records or to determine whether they are available within the five-day period. Such response specifies the conditions which make a response impossible. If the response is made within five working days, one of the preceding responses is provided within an additional seven-day period.

No public record is withheld in its entirety on the grounds that some portion of the public record is excluded from disclosure by law. A public record may be withheld from disclosure in its entirety only to the extent that an exclusion from disclosure applies to the entire content of the public record. Otherwise, only those portions of the public record containing information subject to an exclusion may be withheld, and all portions of the public record that are not so excluded are disclosed.

The school division may petition the appropriate court for additional time to respond to a request for records when the request is for an extraordinary volume of records or requires an extraordinarily lengthy search and a response within the time outlined above will prevent the school division from meeting its operational responsibilities. Before proceeding with the petition, the school division will make reasonable efforts to reach an agreement with the requester concerning the production of the records requested.

2. The five-day period begins on the first working day following the day the request is received by the school division. Any time that elapses between the time the

requester is notified of an advance cost determination pursuant to the procedures detailed below and the time that the requester responds to that notice is not counted in calculating the five working days.

### **Processing of Requests**

1. The FOIA Officer, after receiving a request, promptly makes an initial determination as to whether the requested records will be provided to the requester, will be withheld, either completely or in part, or if it is practically impossible to provide the requested records or to determine whether they are available within five days.
2. If the FOIA Officer is unsure whether the requested documents should be provided to the requester, legal advice is promptly sought.
3. If the FOIA Officer is uncertain whether the requested records exist or where they may be located, efforts are promptly initiated to locate the records or determine whether they exist.
4. If the requested records will be made available either in whole or in part, the FOIA Officer promptly consults with School Board staff to determine the cost involved to assemble the records for inspection and copying. Where portions of individual records must be redacted prior to inspection and copying, the cost of doing this is taken into account. The following costs are charged at the rates indicated, not to exceed actual cost:
  - Staff member search time, charged by the quarter hour. Depending on the staff member(s) involved in the search, rates of \$2.50 to \$10.00 per quarter hour may apply.
  - Computer search time, charged at the rate of \$2.50 per quarter hour
  - Computer printouts, charged at the rate of 0.25 cents per page
  - Photocopies (including those necessary to perform redactions), charged at the rate of 0.25 cents per page.
  - Incidental out-of-pocket costs necessary to assemble the records (for example: phone, postage, or courier charges).
5. If the requester has asked for an advance determination of the cost, or if the cost is expected to exceed \$200, the requester shall be notified in advance of the cost associated with the request. If the cost of the request is determined to exceed \$200, the School Board may, before continuing to process the request, require the requester to agree to payment of a deposit not to exceed the amount of the advance determination. The deposit shall be credited toward the final cost of supplying the requested records. No further action shall be taken until the requester responds, and the requester must agree to pay the estimated amount before any further processing of the request is performed.
6. Before processing a request for records, the FOIA Officer may require the requester to pay any amounts owed to the school board for previous requests for records that remain unpaid 30 days or more after billing.
7. If school division records have been transferred to any entity, including any other public body, for storage, maintenance or archiving, the school division remains the custodian of the records for purposes of responding to requests and is responsible for retrieving and supplying the records to the requester.

8. Any records to be disclosed are assembled for inspection and copying by school board staff, under the direction and supervision of the FOIA Officer.
9. School board staff are responsible for recording the date the request was received, verifying identification and recording and assembling additional information about the request as indicated on Form KBA-F1 Request for Public Records.

Adopted: April 15, 1999  
Adopted: April 17, 2002  
Adopted: April 23, 2003  
Amended: August 22, 2007  
Revised: June 23, 2010  
Revised: April 22, 2015  
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Revised: June 27, 2018  
Revised: March 27, 2019  
Revised: February 27, 2020

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 2.2-3704, 2.2-3704.01, 2.2-3704.2.

Cross Ref.: KBA            Requests for Public Records

## REQUEST FOR PUBLIC RECORDS

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I am a (check one):

- Citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Member of the Press referenced in Va. Code §2.2-3704  
News Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Requesters may be asked to provide verification that they are citizens of the Commonwealth or a member of the press referenced in Va. Code § 2.2-3704.

**STAFF USE ONLY**

Date Request Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Request was made (check one)

- by requester on this form
- by telephone
- in writing other than on form  
(attach original request)

Date Response Sent: \_\_\_\_\_  
(attach copy)

- Identification Verified  
Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- Itemized Cost Estimate Attached

I am requesting access to the following records (please be as specific as possible, and attach additional paper if necessary) \_\_\_\_\_

Reasonable costs may be assessed in connection with this request. A current schedule of costs appears in Regulation KBA-R Requests for Public Records. If the costs associated with this request are expected to exceed \$200, the requestor will be asked to pay the estimated costs before the request is processed.

In addition, the requestor may ask for an advance determination of the cost of the request. Please indicate here if you would like an advance determination of cost.  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

If you are requesting copies, please specify the format in which you would like to receive them. Dickenson County school division will provide the record(s) in the requested format if that medium is used by it in the regular course of its business.

Specify format desired (if available):

- Photocopies
- E-mail (give address): \_\_\_\_\_
- Website posting
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:**  
DICKENSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
PO BOX 1127, CLINTWOOD, VA 24228

**RECORD OF INSPECTION and/or  
DELIVERY OF COPIES**

**Inspection of Public Records**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time In \_\_\_\_\_ Time Out \_\_\_\_\_

Person Inspecting Records

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Signature

Staff Person in Attendance

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Signature

Records Reviewed (describe)

**Copies of Public Records**

<u>Record</u>	<u>No.</u> <u>Pages</u>	<u>Delivery Method</u> <u>(mail, e-mail,</u> <u>etc.)</u>	<u>Date of</u> <u>Delivery</u>	<u>Cost (if any)</u>	<u>Date and</u> <u>Method of</u> <u>Payment</u>
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Staff Person  
Providing Copies

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Signature