



What to Expect as a Public Employee

Records Request Edition

Receiving a public records request notification email can be confusing if you don't know what to expect. This document provides information to UW–Madison employees on the public records law and the process the [Public Records Unit](#) of the Office of Compliance uses for requests for public records that our employees may hold or maintain as a part of their jobs.

Someone has made a public records request for some of the records I have created or that I manage or hold. Now what?

Records Team Commitments

First, know that the UW–Madison Public Records Office will work with you collaboratively and transparently throughout the process:

- We will provide you all of the relevant information we have regarding the public records request that you are connected to.
- We will make time to meet with you to answer any questions.
- We will always hear your concerns, even when we cannot withhold records.
- We partner with the Office of Legal Affairs when needed to be sure that records requests are handled appropriately.

Expectations

Expect that at some point in your career, the UW–Madison Public Records Office will reach out to you for program, research, budget, or other records held by you or in your work group that have been requested in a public records request. This is where the university needs your help to be in compliance with the law through a timely and thorough response.

Expect that records will be released. That is the basic presumption of the law. All records requests start here. From there, records custodians review for required and permissible reasons to withhold portions of the records.

Expect to provide information and context to the records custodian, not just records. The university takes seriously its obligation to protect information and withhold release as required or provided for by law. This may include student information, medical information, purely personal information, information that could result in harassment or stalking, and other information raising privacy concerns. If you know of anything like this affecting the requested records, call the records custodians right away.

Expect to have a reasonable amount of time to reply with requested records or information. We work as a team. All of your work need not stop to fulfill a request, but it should be a priority in your work.

Expect cybersecurity to pull requested emails and messages. You will be notified of the request and have the chance to see and review prior to release.

Expect that all work-related records could be released, no matter where those records are stored. Tell the records custodian if work related records are held in other places, including Gmail or personal email accounts. If you use personal phones or accounts for work, you will be required to retrieve and produce the work records from those personal devices or accounts if requested.

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