



Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia

Office of the Director

June 14, 2006

Hon. Alberto Gonzalez
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Re: Improving Agency Disclosure of Information pursuant to
Executive Order 13392

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

As Director of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia (CSOSA), my agency has responsibility for implementing Executive Order 13392 for both CSOSA and the District of Columbia Pretrial Services Agency (PSA). The United States Congress established CSOSA as an independent federal agency under Section 11233 of the National Capital Revitalization and Self Government Improvement Act of 1997, Pub. Law 105-33, 111 Stat. 748, codified at D.C. Official Code § 24-133. Sections 12333(e)(1) and (2) of the Act recognize the PSA as an independent entity that functions within CSOSA. In the spirit of cooperation and administrative efficiency, and with the concurrence of the Director of PSA, Ms. Susan Shaffer, CSOSA will serve as the lead in CSOSA and PSA's efforts to improve agency disclosure of information in accordance with Executive Order 13392.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13392, I am submitting the CSOSA/PSA improvement plan for the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

Presently, CSOSA, which also responds to FOIA requests for the Pretrial Services Agency, is generally processing requests within the 20-day statutory time limit. However, there is room for improvement. A review of agency operations was conducted and our findings are listed below.

A. Agency FOIA operations

1. FOIA requests are sent directly to the FOIA officer, who reports directly to the General Counsel. Once it is

received, the request is reviewed to ensure that the information sought has been properly identified and, since the majority of our requests are third-party requests, proper authorization has been obtained to release the information.

2. The FOIA officer, either directly or through the FOIA paralegal or interns, designates a request number and the documents are requested from agency staff.
3. Once the requested information is received, two copies are made. A review of the file is performed to determine what, if any, information should be withheld from the requester pursuant to the FOIA/Privacy Act (PA). In the agency's response letter, an explanation is provided detailing the number of pages located, number of pages released in full, number of pages redacted, number of pages withheld and cost, if any.
4. If the file contains documents that originated with another federal agency, a copy of these pages are sent to the originating agency's FOIA office along with a copy of the original request. The CSOSA FOIA officer will also inform the requester of this action in the response letter.
5. A copy of the sent file; copies of all information withheld from the requester pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552, and copies of all documents referred to other agencies, is kept by the FOIA office for the appropriate number of years, after which the FOIA file copy is destroyed.

B. Areas selected for review

1. FOIA web site improvement
2. Acknowledgment letters
3. Electronic FOIA - automated processing

C. Summary of results

1. FOIA web site improvement: The agency web site provides access to the annual report, an electronic reading room, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS) and agency policies. Since the majority of our requests (98 percent) deal with Privacy Act protected records, we do not currently accept requests for records via the web site.
2. Acknowledgment letters: Since the requests are normally answered within the 20-day time period, no acknowledgments are sent to the requesters. The majority of our requests come from the Public Defender Service for the District of

Columbia (PDS) and their requests are hand-delivered to CSOSA.

3. Electronic FOIA - automated processing: In September 2006, software was purchased which allows electronic processing of requests. In December 2006, FOIA staff along with IT staff met with the vendor to begin the initial set-up of the system. Training was conducted during April 2006.

D. Improvement areas

1. Acknowledgment letters.

Goal: Send out acknowledgment letters to non-PDS requesters.

Steps:

- Develop letter that will contain the request number, date of receipt and a contact phone number. To be completed and implemented by October 1, 2006.

2. Improving communication with requesters.

Goal: To be proactive by informing requesters on the status of a request when we are within five workdays of the due date and records have not been received.

Steps:

- Train staff in preparing letters and making notations in the case file to note that the requester has been contacted. To be completed by December 1, 2006.

Goal: If clarification is needed on a request, contact the requester immediately.

Steps:

- Provide further training for staff to detect when a request is deficient ((i.e.) records not identified, not an agency record or lacks proper authorization). To be completed by October 1, 2006.

3. FOIA web site improvement.

Goal: Accept FOIA requests for agency policies, regulations, contracts or other public documents via CSOSA's web site.

Steps:

- Meet with our IT staff to determine what technology and/or equipment would be necessary. To be completed by December 2006.
- Develop FOIA office mailbox to receive and acknowledge requests. To be completed by June 2007.

Additionally, on May 1, 2006, the FOIA Section began automated processing of FOIA/PA requests. The new software assigns the request number, tracks the number of days remaining and the number of days to process a request and can produce the annual report. We anticipate the use of this software will cut down on the FOIA section's use of paper. Also, we believe that this software will reduce processing time for duplicate requests since information previously processed is stored in the system.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Quander, Jr.
Director

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