

New Jersey Government Records Council

What To Do If Your Request for a Record Has Been Denied

The New Jersey Open Public Records Act (N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq.) permits a person who believes he or she has been illegally denied access to a public record to file a complaint with the Government Records Council (GRC), or file suit in Superior Court to challenge the decision and compel disclosure. This poster describes the procedures for taking these actions.

To file a complaint with the Government Records Council:

- Contact the GRC by phone at: **1-866-850-0511**, by e-mail at grc@dca.state.nj.us, or review the GRC web site at www.nj.gov/grc for information and to register your complaint.
- The GRC staff may be able to help resolve the problem over the phone. If not, you can receive a complaint form through the mail or from the web site.
- When you file the written complaint, the GRC will offer you and the public agency non-adversarial, impartial mediation.
- If mediation is not agreed to or fails, the GRC will investigate the complaint.
- The investigation may result in findings or a formal decision by the GRC, which may include a hearing by the Council.
- In some cases, the Council can award attorneys fees or fine a records custodian for failing to provide records.
- Details of this process are available from the GRC.
- There is no fee to file a complaint with the GRC.

To file a complaint in Superior Court:

- A requester may start a summary (expedited) lawsuit in the Superior Court. A written complaint and order to show cause must be filed with the court.
- The court requires a \$200 filing fee, and you must serve the lawsuit papers on the appropriate public officials.
- The court will schedule a hearing and resolve the dispute.
- If you disagree with the court's decision, you may appeal the decision to the Appellate Division of Superior Court.
- If you are successful, you may be entitled to reasonable attorney fees.
- You may wish to consult with an attorney to learn about initiating and pursuing a summary lawsuit in the Superior Court.



For more information, contact the **Government Records Council** toll-free at 866-850-0511 or grc@dca.state.nj.us.

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