



FOIA / Public Records Requests (Wyoming Sunshine Law)

How to Get Information from your District

If your school district won't clearly answer questions, won't post publicly, or tells you "we don't have to provide that," you still have options.

Wyoming parents (and any citizen) have a legal right to request public records from school districts, including emails, contracts, training materials, curriculum resources, and spending. This is often the fastest and most effective way to force transparency.

In Wyoming, this is not technically called "FOIA." It's called the Wyoming Public Records Act, sometimes called the Sunshine Law.

What This Law Does

The Wyoming Public Records Act gives you the right to:

- Inspect records
- Receive copies of records
- Request records in electronic form
- Get an explanation if a request is denied

School districts must respond within a **reasonable time** (often within 30 days).

Who Can Make a Request?

Anyone! You do **not** even have to live in Wyoming to request records!

What Can You Request?

Most records held by school districts, including:

Common parent requests

- Curriculum lists or instructional materials
- Teacher training / professional development materials
- Vendor contracts and program materials (SEL, DEI, etc.)
- District emails related to a program or policy
- Grant contracts or grant-funded programming
- Surveys sent to students
- Meeting notes or administrative memos

What Can Be Withheld?

Not all records are public. Some common exemptions include:

- Private personal information (SSNs, etc.)
- Education records of *other* students (FERPA)
- Ongoing law enforcement investigations
- Attorney-client privileged communications

But here's the key: If they deny something, they should explain why and cite the exemption.

The 3 Rules for a Good Records Request

Most parents don't get ignored because they're wrong. They get ignored because the request is too broad or unclear.

A strong request is:

1) Specific: Name the topic or program and include a date range.

2) Written: Email is best (you want proof it was submitted).

3) Professional: No accusations. Just a clear, lawful request.

Template #1 - Simple Records Request (Parents)

Subject: Public Records Request – [Topic]

Dear [Records Custodian / Superintendent / District Office],

Pursuant to the Wyoming Public Records Act (§ 16-4-201 et seq.), I am requesting copies of the following records:

1. [Example: All curriculum and instructional materials used for ____ (class/program)]
2. [Example: Any training materials provided to staff related to ____]
3. [Example: Any contracts, MOUs, or vendor agreements related to ____]

Time period requested: [Month/Year] through [Month/Year].

Please provide the records electronically by email or shared link if available. If any portion of this request is denied, please provide the written reason for denial and cite the specific statutory exemption.

If fees are expected to exceed \$____, please notify me before proceeding.

Please confirm receipt of this request and provide an estimated date for completion.

Thank you for your assistance,

[Name]

[Phone number optional]

(Optional) I am requesting a fee waiver because this request is in the public interest.

Template #2 - Curriculum / Instructional Materials Request

Use this if your district says: “We don’t have to provide.....”

Subject: Request for Instructional Materials – [School / Grade / Course]

Dear [Name],

Pursuant to the Wyoming Public Records Act (§ 16-4-201 et seq.), I am requesting access to and copies of the instructional materials used in:

- [School Name]
- [Course / Grade Level]
- [Teacher Name if known]

This includes:

- Required texts and reading lists
- Digital platforms and subscriptions
- Instructional handouts, packets, slides, and videos
- Supplemental materials provided to students

Timeframe: [School Year]

Please provide electronically if available. If any records are withheld, please cite the specific exemption. Please confirm receipt of this request and provide an estimated date for completion.

Thank you,

[Name]

Template #3 — Email Request (The “Paper Trail” Request) This is great for DEI/SEL program questions and “who decided this.”

Subject: Public Records Request – Emails regarding [Program Name]

Dear [Name],

Pursuant to the Wyoming Public Records Act (§ 16-4-201 et seq.), I am requesting:

All emails and written correspondence (including attachments) between:

- [District official names or “district administration”]
- and [vendor/program name]

regarding:

- [program/training]

Time period requested: [Month/Year] through [Month/Year].

Please provide electronically. If any records are withheld, please cite the statutory exemption.

Please confirm receipt of this request and provide an estimated date for completion.

Thank you,

[Name]

What If They Ignore You or Stall?

School districts must respond within a “reasonable time.”

If they don’t:

Step 1: Follow up (7–10 business days): “I’m following up on the public records request submitted on [date]. Please confirm receipt and provide an expected timeline for response.”

Step 2: Ask for clarification on delays: “If additional time is needed, please specify why and provide an estimated completion date.”

Step 3: Contact the Wyoming Ombudsman: The Ombudsman can receive complaints, mediate, and help clarify the law. They cannot force a district to comply but they often help move things forward.

Wyoming Public Records Ombudsman (Help When You’re Ignored)

Wyoming has a Public Records Ombudsman whose job is to help the public understand public records law and resolve disputes between citizens and government entities. This little known resource is one of the easiest ways to get help when a district stalls, refuses, delays, or ignores your public records request.

Official Ombudsman Resources

- Ombudsman information page: <https://governor.wyo.gov/contact/public-records-ombudsman>

- Ombudsman complaint form:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScINU0zZhDJsd6Zbm-V72Iro3tCSdZAKLp5b2ZmLLaZBF1pWA/viewform>
- Ombudsman email: pr.ombudsman@wyo.gov

What the Ombudsman CAN do

- Explain your rights
- Review your request
- Help you narrow or clarify what to ask for
- Contact the district and try to resolve the issue
- Recommend that the district comply

What the Ombudsman CANNOT do

The Ombudsman cannot force the district to comply and does not issue binding legal orders.

But in practice, the Ombudsman often helps because:

- Districts don't like being on the Ombudsman's radar
- It signals you are serious
- It creates another paper trail

When Should Parents Contact the Ombudsman?

Contact the Ombudsman if:

- Your request is ignored
- You get stalled for weeks with no timeline
- You receive an unfair denial
- The district claims "we don't have that" but you know they do
- The district demands unreasonable fees
- The district refuses to cite a reason for denial

What to Send the Ombudsman

When filing a complaint or requesting help, include:

- Your original records request
- The date you submitted it
- Any responses from the district
- What you are trying to receive
- What the district is doing (ignoring, delaying, denying, overcharging)

Tip: Use the Complaint Form First

The Ombudsman provides an official complaint form on the Governor's website. Using the form helps ensure your complaint is complete and routed correctly. If you need to attach records or follow up, use the Ombudsman email above.

Fees: What to Know

Districts may charge "reasonable fees" for copying or staff time.

You can ask:

- For an estimate first
- For a fee waiver
- For electronic delivery to reduce costs

If fees feel abusive, request an explanation and contact the Ombudsman for advice.

Why Records Requests Matter

Records requests are one of the most powerful tools parents have because they:

- Stop vague talking points
- Force documentation
- Expose contracts and training content
- Create accountability
- Create a clean paper trail

Districts often only provide the minimum, so follow-up requests are normal.