



Citizens' field guide to police records

Here are some tips to getting public information from police departments more successfully:

Know the law: The state's Freedom of Information Act requires law enforcement agencies to make certain types of documents available for inspection during regular business hours. That includes crime incident reports that disclose "nature, substance, and location of any crime or alleged crime."

■ Police can black out pieces of information that threaten the safety of the victim or interfere with an ongoing investigation.

When you're there: You're not required to identify yourself.

■ The agency is required to provide access to incident reports for the previous two weeks.

■ If you need a copy, state law says they "must be furnished at the lowest possible cost." If the cost is more than you would expect to pay at a copy shop, ask for a detailed explanation of the costs.

After you leave: If you think you're being denied access or being charged too much for those documents, you can take legal action.

Scott Farrand for the AP

SLUG: FOI_ACCESS