

2016 Chief FOIA Officer Report for Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency

Name and Title of your Agency's Chief FOIA Officer:

Sheila Stokes, General Counsel

Section I: Steps Taken to Apply the Presumption of Openness

FOIA Training:

1. Did your FOIA professionals or the personnel at your agency who have FOIA responsibilities attend any FOIA training or conference during the reporting period such as that provided by the Department of Justice?

- Such training or events can include offerings from OIP, your own agency or another agency or organization.

Yes. One employee attended a two-day training conference in June 2015 offered by OIP.

2. Provide an estimate of the percentage of your FOIA professionals and staff with FOIA responsibilities who attended substantive FOIA training during this reporting period.

Since there were two FOIA employees this past year and only one attended training, the estimate is 50%.

3. OIP has *directed agencies* to "take steps to ensure that all of their FOIA professionals attend substantive FOIA training at least once throughout the year." If your response to the previous question is that less than 80% of your FOIA professionals attended training, please explain your agency's plan to ensure that all FOIA professionals receive or attend substantive FOIA training during the next reporting year.

No plan has been established at this time since we only have one staff member (Government Information Specialist) handling the work. However, if the caseload eases up and a Chief FOIA Officer is hired; there is a FOIA workshop sponsored by OIP/DOJ in June 2016 that the Government Information Specialist will attend.

Discretionary Releases:

4. Does your agency have a distinct process or system in place to review records for discretionary release?

Not at this time. The majority of our requests are for Privacy Act protected information.

- If so, please briefly describe this process.
- If your agency is decentralized, please specify whether all components of your agency have such a process or system in place?

5. During the reporting period, did your agency make any discretionary releases of information?

No releases were made.

6. What exemption(s) would have covered the material released as a matter of discretion? For a discussion of the exemptions that allow for discretionary releases, please see OIP's guidance on

implementing the President's and Attorney General's 2009 FOIA Memoranda.

Not applicable.

7. Provide a narrative description, as well as some specific examples, of the types of information that your agency released as a matter of discretion during the reporting year.

Not applicable.

8. If your agency was not able to make any discretionary releases of information, please explain why. For example, you should note here if your agency did not have an opportunity to make discretionary disclosures because you provided full releases in response to all requests or the only exemptions that were applied were those that do not lend themselves to discretionary release (i.e. Exemptions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7A, 7B, 7C, 7F).

Since the majority of our records are Privacy Act protected, we are not at liberty to make discretionary releases under Exemptions 6, 7C, 7D and 7F; however, this past year we did apply Exemptions 2 and 5.

Other Initiatives:

9. If there are any other initiatives undertaken by your agency to ensure that the presumption of openness is being applied, please describe them here.

- If any of these initiatives are online, please provide links in your description.

No other initiatives have been undertaken at this time.

Section II: Steps Taken to Ensure that Your Agency Has an Effective System in Place for Responding to Requests

Processing Procedures:

1. For Fiscal Year 2015, what was the average number of days your agency reported for adjudicating requests for expedited processing? Please see Section VIII.A. of your agency's Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report.

- Please note here if your agency did not adjudicate any requests for expedited processing during Fiscal Year 2015.

We did not adjudicate any requests for expedited processing.

2. If your agency's average number of days to adjudicate requests for expedited processing was above ten calendar days, please describe the steps your agency will take to ensure that requests for expedited processing are adjudicated within ten calendar days or less.

Not applicable.

3. On July 2, 2015, OIP issued *new guidance* to agencies on the proper procedures to be used in the event an agency has a reason to inquire whether a requester is still interested in the processing of his or her request. Please confirm here that to the extent your agency may have had occasion to send a "still interested" inquiry, it has done so in accordance with the new guidelines for doing so,

including affording requesters thirty working days to respond.

Yes, a few “still interested” inquiries were sent to requestors (both via telephone and email) in accordance the OIP’s guidance; the requestors responded on the same day or the day after the inquiries were sent.

Requester Services:

4. Agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons serve as the face and voice of an agency. In this capacity they provide a very important service for requesters, informing them about how the FOIA process works and providing specific details on the handling of their individual requests. The FOIA also calls on agency FOIA Requester Service Centers and FOIA Public Liaisons to assist requesters in resolving disputes. Please explain here any steps your agency has taken to strengthen these services to better inform requesters about their requests and to prevent or resolve FOIA disputes.

At this time, no such steps have been done.

- *If your agency has not taken any steps recently to strengthen these services, either because there has been no need to due to low demand or because these services are already robust, please briefly explain that that here.*

There is only one staff member that handles requestors’ questions and concerns and this is done either telephonically or via email, if the requestor provides an email address and/or phone number.

Other Initiatives:

5. If there are any other steps your agency has undertaken to ensure that your FOIA system operates efficiently and effectively, such as conducting self-assessments to find greater efficiencies, improving search processes, eliminating redundancy, etc., please describe them here.

At this time, no such undertakings have been done.

Section III: Steps Taken to Increase Proactive Disclosures

Posting Material:

1. Describe your agency's process or system for identifying "frequently requested" records required to be posted online under Subsection (a)(2) of the FOIA. For example, does your agency monitor its FOIA logs or is there some other system in place to identify these records for posting.

At this time, we do not have any “frequently requested” records that should be posted online because our “frequently requested” records are supervision records of current and former offenders which are Privacy Act protected and should not be posted online.

2. Does your agency have a distinct process or system in place to identify other records for

proactive disclosure? If so, please describe your agency's process or system.

- Please note that this question is directed towards proactive disclosure of records that go beyond frequently requested records required to be posted under Subsection (a)(2) of the FOIA.

As indicated above, the majority of our requests deal with Privacy Act protected records. However, we do post agency records such as the Strategic Plan, current and past fiscal year budgets, and offender profile statistics. The offender statistics are updated monthly at www.csosa.gov. Other agency staff, not FOIA staff, determines and is responsible for the information to proactively disclose.

3. When making proactive disclosures of records, are your agency's FOIA professionals involved in coding the records for Section 508 compliance or otherwise preparing them for posting? If so, provide an estimate of how much time is involved for each of your FOIA professionals and your agency overall.

- Please note that this question is directed at the efforts of actually posting the records online once all disclosure determinations have been made. For example, efforts to load the records in your web content platform or making the releasable documents accessible in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Making proactive disclosures of records Section 508 compliant and posting to the agency's website is done by non-FOIA staff.

4. Has your agency encountered challenges that make it difficult to post records you otherwise would like to post?

No.

5. If so, please briefly explain those challenges.

Not applicable.

6. Provide examples of material that your agency has proactively disclosed during the past reporting year, including links to the posted material.

We post agency records such as the Strategic Plan, current and past fiscal year budgets, and offender profile statistics, which are updated monthly. These records can be found on the agency's website at www.csosa.gov.

7. Did your agency use any means to publicize or highlight important proactive disclosures for public awareness? If yes, please describe those efforts.

- For example, this can be done through social media or with the offering of e-mail subscription services.

Not at this time.

Other Initiatives:

8. If there are any other steps your agency has taken to increase proactive disclosures, please describe them here.

Not at this time.

Section IV: Steps Taken to Greater Utilize Technology

Making Material Posted Online More Usable:

1. Beyond posting new material, is your agency taking steps to make the posted information more useable to the public, especially to the community of individuals who regularly access your agency's website?

- Steps can include soliciting feedback on the content and presentation of posted material, improving search capabilities on your agency website, posting material in open formats, making information available through mobile applications, providing explanatory material, etc.

Not at this time.

2. If yes, please provide examples of such improvements.

- If your agency is already posting material in its most useful format, please describe these efforts.

Posting material to the agency's website in its most useful format is done by non-FOIA staff. As previously indicated, examples include agency records such as the Strategic Plan, current and past fiscal year budgets, and monthly offender profile statistics.

Other Initiatives:

3. Did your agency successfully post all four quarterly reports for Fiscal Year 2015?

- Please see OIP's [guidance](#) for posting of quarterly reports to ensure that your agency is following all required steps (including using the correct file type and URL structure) so that your quarterly reports are properly appearing on FOIA.gov. (If your reports are posted to your website, but not appearing on FOIA.gov, please contact OIP in order to resolve the issue.)

Yes, on the agency's website.

4. If your agency did not successfully post all quarterly reports, with information appearing on FOIA.gov, please explain why and provide your agency's plan for ensuring that such reporting is successful in Fiscal Year 2016.

Due to low staff (only two employees this past fiscal year responsible for processing all

FOIAs) the emphasis was placed on ensuring the majority of our requests were processed in a timely fashion. Currently, there is one full-time employee (Government Information Specialist) handling all FOIA requests and concentrating on processing these requests timely. Once a new Chief FOIA Officer is hired, that person will be responsible for working with OIP to ensure successful reporting to FOIA.gov in fiscal year 2016.

5. Do your agency's FOIA professionals use e-mail or other electronic means to communicate with requesters whenever feasible? See OIP Guidance, "*The Importance of Good Communication with FOIA Requesters 2.0: Improving Both the Means and the Content of Requester Communications.*" (Nov. 22, 2013) If yes, what are the different types of electronic means that are utilized by your agency to communicate with requesters?

Yes. We use email or the telephone to communicate with requestors, as long as the requestor has provided their email or telephone number for contact purposes.

6. If your agency does not communicate electronically with requesters as a default, are there any limitations or restrictions for the use of such means? If yes, does your agency inform requesters about such limitations? See *id.*

Not applicable.

Section V: Steps Taken to Improve Timeliness in Responding to Requests and Reducing Backlogs

Simple Track: Section VII.A of your agency's Annual FOIA Report, entitled "FOIA Requests – Response Time for All Processed Requests," includes figures that show your agency's average response times for processed requests. For agencies utilizing a multi-track system to process requests, there is a category for "simple" requests, which are those requests that are placed in the agency's fastest (non-expedited) track, based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.

1. Does your agency utilize a separate track for simple requests? **Yes.**

2. If so, for your agency overall in Fiscal Year 2015, was the average number of days to process simple requests twenty working days or fewer? **No**

3. Please provide the percentage of requests processed by your agency in Fiscal Year 2015 that were placed in your simple track.

100%

4. If your agency does not track simple requests separately, was the average number of days to process all non-expedited requests twenty working days or fewer?

Not applicable.

Backlogs:

BACKLOGGED REQUESTS

5. If your agency had a backlog of requests at the close of Fiscal Year 2015, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2014? **Yes.**

6. If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce its backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

An increase in the number of incoming requests.

A loss of staff.

An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.

Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

Not applicable.

7. If you had a request backlog please report the percentage of requests that make up the backlog out of the total number of requests received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2015.

- To calculate your agency's percentage, you must divide the number of backlogged requests reported in Section XII.A. of your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report by the number of requests received in Fiscal Year 2015, which can be found in Section V.A. of your Annual FOIA Report. Once divided, you can multiply that number by 100 to get the percentage.

4%

BACKLOGGED APPEALS

8. If your agency had a backlog of appeals at the close of Fiscal Year 2015, did that backlog decrease as compared with the backlog reported at the end of Fiscal Year 2014?

Not applicable.

9. If not, explain why and describe the causes that contributed to your agency not being able reduce backlog. When doing so, please also indicate if any of the following were contributing factors:

An increase in the number of incoming appeals.

A loss of staff.

An increase in the complexity of the requests received. If possible, please provide examples or briefly describe the types of complex requests contributing to your backlog increase.

Any other reasons – please briefly describe or provide examples when possible.

Not applicable.

10. If you had an appeal backlog please report the percentage of appeals that make up the backlog out of the total number of appeals received by your agency in Fiscal Year 2015. If your agency did

not receive any appeals in Fiscal Year 2015 and/or has no appeal backlog, please answer with "N/A."

To calculate your agency's percentage, you must divide the number of backlogged appeals reported in Section XII.A. of your Fiscal Year 2015 Annual FOIA Report by the number of appeals received in Fiscal Year 2015, which can be found in Section V.A. of your Annual FOIA Report. Once divided, you can multiply that number by 100 to get the percentage.

Not applicable.

TEN OLDEST REQUESTS

11. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest requests that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report? **Yes**

12. If no, please provide the number of these requests your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.E of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest requests to close, please indicate that.

For example, if you only had seven requests listed as part of your "ten oldest" in Section VII.E. and you closed six of them, you should note that you closed six out of seven "oldest" requests.

13. Of the requests your agency was able to close from your ten oldest, please indicate how many of these were closed because the request was withdrawn by the requester. If any were closed because the request was withdrawn, did you provide any interim responses prior to the withdrawal?

None of the requests were withdrawn.

TEN OLDEST APPEALS

14. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest appeals that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report?

Not applicable.

15. If no, please provide the number of these appeals your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section VII.C.(5) of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest appeals to close, please indicate that.

- For example, if you only had seven appeals listed as part of your "ten oldest" in Section VII.C.(5) and you closed six of them, you should note that you closed six out of seven "oldest" appeals.

TEN OLDEST CONSULTATIONS

16. In Fiscal Year 2015, did your agency close the ten oldest consultations that were reported pending in your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report?

Not applicable.

17. If no, please provide the number of these consultations your agency was able to close by the end of the fiscal year, as listed in Section XII.C. of your Fiscal Year 2014 Annual FOIA Report. If you had less than ten total oldest consultations to close, please indicate that.

- For example, if you only had seven consultations listed as part of your "ten oldest" in Section XII.C. and you closed six of them, you should note that you closed six out of seven "oldest" consultations.

Additional Information on Ten Oldest Requests, Appeals, and Consultations & Plans:

18. Briefly explain any obstacles your agency faced in closing its ten oldest requests, appeals, and consultations from Fiscal Year 2014.

Not applicable.

19. If your agency was unable to close any of its ten oldest requests because you were waiting to hear back from other agencies on consultations you sent, please provide the date the request was initially received by your agency, the date when your agency sent the consultation, and the date when you last contacted the agency where the consultation was pending.

Not applicable.

20. If your agency did not close its ten oldest pending requests, appeals, or consultations, please provide a plan describing how your agency intends to close those "ten oldest" requests, appeals, and consultations during Fiscal Year 2016.

Not applicable.

Use of the FOIA's Law Enforcement Exclusions

1. Did your agency invoke a statutory exclusion, 5 U.S.C. § 552(c)(1), (2), (3), during Fiscal Year 2015?

No.

2. If so, please provide the total number of times exclusions were invoked.

Not applicable.