

The following questions to and answers from Jeff May, County Auditor, are provided to assist in making your request regarding any check written by Collin County:

What type of record is provided regarding any check written?

The check registers include the check number, vendor name, check date, and the check amount. The checks are divided into three groups, with the primary checking account being the general account. The checks may appear to have skips in the numbering; this occurs because the general account, health care account, and child protective services all share the same account. We keep them separate based on bank codes. This also permits us to remove from the list those checks which may contain sensitive personal information, about employees or private citizens. If the check you request information about includes any of that information, we will confirm with the state rules as to its availability to be made public. If it cannot, we will let you know; otherwise, we are an open book, transparent as your government should be in its dealings and services.

How do I make a public information request for a specific check?

We have provided a form that you may submit electronically. Your e-mail address will be considered your signature. All requests must be in writing, but the form can be filled out on-line and submitted on-line directly to our accounts payable personnel. The form permits you to request one check at a time. If you need to request more than one check at a time, please submit your request in writing to financialtransparency@co.collin.tx.us and provide the information as noted on the form. If you just want an answer to "what was this for?" we will provide it to you in a return e-mail. If you want copies, there may be a charge for paper copies. If the request is lengthy, there may also be labor charges. If there is a cost involved, we require a deposit upfront before the copies are made. Settlement will be at the time the request is delivered to you. Each transaction includes the description of the expense line where it was recorded; these descriptions may answer most of your questions.

How long should it take to receive a response to my request for information about a check?

The Open Records Act provides that we respond "promptly" to a request for information. We will contact you as soon as we have the answer which should be fairly quickly. We do have ten days, but if we are cannot produce the requested information within ten business days, we will notify you and will set a date and time when the information will be provided.

What if I cannot send the form by e-mail using the submit button?

The form cannot be saved as a filled in form. Please remember that the form is not actually sent; instead, a data file containing the information you type in is sent. This should not be a problem for Outlook or Outlook Express. You may need to sign in to your Hotmail or Yahoo account first. If you are still unable to send the completed data file, then print out the blank form, complete it by hand, and fax it to us at 972-548-4696. We apologize for the inconvenience.

In addition to the questions posed and answered above, the following questions and answers from the web site of Greg Abbott, Texas Attorney General, are provided to assist you. Some of the responses and procedures may be different, as we are dealing with only one specific subject (checks); please refer to the above requirements if there is a conflict.

What types of records are subject to the Public Information Act?

Any information collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is subject to the Public Information Act. The format (paper, electronic, microfilm, etc.) of the record does not affect its status as a public record.

How do I make a public information request?

The request must be in writing and must be addressed to the governmental body. While the request does not need to be addressed to any particular person, it is a good practice to clearly label your correspondence as a "Public Information Request" or "Open Records Request." Requests sent via fax must be addressed to the public information officer or to the person designated by that officer to receive such requests.

What should I say in my public information request?

No "magic language" is required to trigger the Public Information Act. You should, however, make the request as clear and as specific as possible. This will enable the governmental body to identify exactly what information you are requesting.

How long does the governmental body have to respond to my request for information?

The Act provides that a governmental body must respond "promptly" to a request for information. If a governmental body is unable to produce the requested information within ten business days, the officer for public information must send you correspondence certifying that he is unable to do so and he must set a date and time when the records will be available to you.

May a governmental body ask me why I want the records?

No, a governmental body is forbidden from inquiring about the purpose for which the records will be used. However, if a request is unclear or very broad, the governmental body may ask the requestor to more clearly identify or narrow his or her request. Additionally, a governmental body may require additional identifying information to determine that the requestor is eligible to receive certain types of information.

When may a governmental body refuse to release the information I request?

If the information you request falls within one of the exceptions to disclosure found in the Public Information Act, the governmental body may refuse to release the information while it seeks an open records decision from the Attorney General. Unless the governmental body has a previous determination from a court or the Attorney General regarding the precise information requested, a governmental body cannot determine on its own to withhold information.

What procedures must be followed if a governmental body wishes to withhold information?

Within ten business days of receiving a written request, the governmental body must:

- write the Attorney General, asking for a decision and state which exceptions apply to the requested information;
- provide the requestor with a written statement that the governmental body wishes to withhold the information and that it has asked the Attorney General for a decision;
- provide the requestor with a copy of the governmental body's correspondence to the Attorney General; and
- make a good faith attempt to notify, in the form prescribed by the Attorney General, any affected third parties of the request.

Within fifteen business days of receiving your request, the governmental body must:

- write the Attorney General and explain how the claimed exceptions apply;
- provide a copy of your written request to the Attorney General;
- provide a signed statement to the Attorney General stating the date the request was received by the governmental body or provide evidence sufficient to establish the date the request was received; and
- provide copies of the documents requested or a representative sample of the documents to the Attorney General and the documents must be labeled to show which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents.

For more information concerning the Public Information Act please feel free to visit:

[Texas Attorney General Open Government Page](#)