

New Mexico Public Records Access Audit

In September, 2000, a statewide audit was conducted to assess compliance to the New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act by public records custodians. The audit was a joint effort by the New Mexico Press Association and its member newspapers, The Associated Press, and the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government.

Survey finds government records frequently unavailable to the public

By Barry Massey
Associated Press Writer

County, city, court and school officials routinely violate state law by failing to release public records such as budgets, public employees' salaries and reports of crimes and court cases, a statewide survey by New Mexico newspapers found.

Three of every 10 requests for access to records were unsuccessful in a check of 210 government offices in all 33 New Mexico counties.

Member newspapers of the New Mexico Press Association and The Associated Press along with the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government sponsored the "freedom of information" audit. The goal was to determine whether records are readily available to the general public.

"When requests for public records are denied about a third or more of the time, it's obvious that some public officials are either ignorant of the public's rights and their own duties - or arrogant about doing their jobs," said Bob Johnson, executive director of the Foundation for Open Government.

New Mexico's Inspection of Public Records Act casts a wide net in defining public records. The law covers written documents and letters, tapes, photographs and records stored in computers or transmitted by email.

"All persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affairs of government and the official acts of public officers and employees," state law declares as public policy.

To measure the gap between what the law says and how it is applied by public employees, newspapers made oral and written requests for records with

agencies across New Mexico from mid-July through early November.

The audit found:

County and city law enforcement agencies were the worst in making records available to the public. Requests failed in 13 of 31 sheriff's departments (42 percent) and 11 of 32 police departments (34 percent).

Twelve of 34 magistrate courts (35 percent) failed to provide records.

The survey found 30 percent of records denied. County, city, court and school officials routinely violate state law by failing to release public records such as budgets, public employees' salaries and reports of crimes and court cases, a statewide survey by New Mexico newspapers found. Three of every 10 requests for access to records were unsuccessful in a check of 210 government offices in all 33 New Mexico counties.

Six of 28 county administrative offices (21 percent) and six of 31 city administrative offices (19 percent) didn't provide requested documents.

Twelve of 44 public school districts (27 percent) and one of 10 colleges and universities (10 percent) failed to provide records.

Even when agencies did release records, their compliance frequently was less than complete. Overall, agencies provided at least some records in 19, or 71 percent, of requests. But on average, one in five of those disclosures lacked some requested information or document.

In failing to provide the requested records, some agencies maintained that the information was confidential. In other instances, supervisors were unavailable to give permission to employees to provide documents. Some workers said they were too busy. Agencies also failed to meet the law's timetable for turning over materials; some never responded to written requests.

Public records can serve as a tool for people to find out more about their communities as well as monitor the performance of government.

A parent can explore the finances of a local school or a would-be homeowner might research neighborhood safety using crime records.

Citizens are entitled to know how much a school superintendent or principal is paid or amounts the school district spends yearly. The public can look at misdemeanor and traffic offenses filed in magistrate courts and find out how the cases were resolved - with fines or jail time.

The New Mexico survey found that in most cases information was handed over upon written or oral requests - although it could be a test of patience and perseverance for the person seeking the records.

State law declares, "No person requesting records shall be required to state the reason for inspecting the records." But individuals were asked for their names and why they wanted records in two of every five requests in the survey.

In one out of seven requests, people had to quote or show state law before gaining access to records.

Confronted with requests for access to documents, government workers often displayed a lack of knowledge about the law or an attitude of secrecy about records related to public business and maintained at taxpayer expense.

"We don't show our records to anyone," an employee in the Eddy County Sheriff's Department replied when initially asked for the daily crime log. It was later provided, however. The person seeking the records was taken into a room by two employees and asked about his profession and why he wanted the crime records. Some form of identification also was demanded before he could look at a crime incident report.

The Moriarty school district superintendent asked police to check the car license plate of an individual who submitted a request for financial records.

A Clovis police sergeant acknowledged that a crime log was a public record but refused to provide access unless the person gave a reason for wanting to look at it. No copies were allowed, the policeman said, because the person might go on a "fishing expedition" with the information.

Occasionally, records requests met with cooperation from helpful public employees.

The magistrate court clerk in Taos demonstrated how to access records through an office computer, explained the court's procedure for logging cases and said it was no bother to provide the help because "all of our records are public information."

The New Mexico records survey was similar to ones conducted in more than a dozen states in the past several years. Indiana's open records law was revamped in 1999 in response to problems documented by an audit of government agencies.

Johnson said results of the New Mexico survey were similar to those in other states.

"This shows that New Mexico government agencies are no worse but certainly no better than in other states," he said.

The survey covered basic public records. Sheriff's department and police were asked for a daily log of crimes and an "incident report" of a crime. Counties, cities and schools were asked for financial information, such as agency budgets and salaries and expenses of administrators. Magistrate courts were asked for a one-month listing of complaints filed by law enforcement and the disposition of the cases.

Some auditors were reporters, others were citizens asked by a newspaper to participate. They completed standardized reports of each audit, including narratives of their experiences. The participants - to help ensure neutral treatment by agencies - were instructed not to identify their employers or describe themselves as part of a survey testing the state's open records law.

Certain records remain confidential under state law, including letters of reference for jobs or certain medical treatment records and police records revealing confidential sources or people accused but not charged with a crime.

Despite those exceptions, state law makes clear that anyone - a local resident or a total stranger - has a right to review a basic police incident report about a burglary and arrest of a suspect or a "police blotter" of recent crimes.

News organizations sometimes can get immediate access to records, particularly when reporters regularly cover a government office and know the agency's workers. However, members of the public may find it harder because they are unfamiliar to government employees who are custodians of the records.

People denied access to records can call the attorney general or a local district attorney. They are the officials responsible for enforcing state law. The Foundation for Open Government also maintains a telephone hotline, 800-284-6634, for people who encounter problems getting records

Snapshots of how people were treated when seeking public records

In southern New Mexico, a reporter found himself interrogated by county law enforcement after asking to look at local crime records.

Hundreds of miles to the north, a school superintendent asked police to check the vehicle license plate of an out-of-towner wanting to see the district's budget and know the salaries of administrators and coaches.

Here is a sampling of what happened to people who requested public records as part of a statewide survey organized by the New Mexico Press Association, The Associated Press and the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government.

In Eddy County, a reporter from the Hobbs News-Sun traveled to Carlsbad to make a routine records request with the sheriff's department.

A dispatch clerk initially denied the request, but the reporter cited state law. A supervisor was summoned and allowed access to the daily crime log. More problems arose when the reporter asked for a copy of a specific "incident report."

"I was told I couldn't have a copy of it because it didn't pertain to me in any way," the reporter wrote in the audit report. "I quoted the law to her again and her reply was, 'There are ways around that.'"

After the reporter pressed for access, the supervisor was summoned again and the clerk said the reporter was "being rude and suspicious."

The supervisor, Gary McCandless, and another officer took the reporter into an adjoining room and "asked questions pertaining to my profession, interest in the documents and reasons for wanting them."

After 10 minutes, the reporter was told the requested information would be provided if he provided personal identification and the department retained a copy of it. Without that, the reporter could expect to wait to obtain the information. State law allows agencies up to 15 days to permit inspection of records after a written request is made. The reporter relented and provided his driver's license.

Eddy County Sheriff M. A. "Chunky" Click said his office had a policy of asking for identification of people seeking crime records to ensure "they are not obtaining information for a wrong reason."

"Think about this. If you had an individual you don't know and he walks in off the street and asks to see a report ... of an investigation, how do you know he is not somebody trying to figure out where somebody lives or get a phone number," Click said in a telephone interview with the AP.

If people refuse to provide identification, they "can jump through the hoops" of making a written request for the records, Click said. A written request requires a person to provide a name, address and telephone number.

The law doesn't require people to identify themselves by occupation or divulge their intended use of public records.

It took three visits to Moriarty for an Albuquerque Journal reporter to obtain financial information from the school district. Superintendent Elna Stowe acknowledged on the first visit that the records were public, but she asked for a written request. She asked why the person wanted the information and whether he was a concerned Moriarty parent.

The reporter, in accordance with the survey procedures, didn't reveal his occupation but said he was from Albuquerque and doing personal and private research.

On the final visit, when much of the requested information was supplied, Stowe met with the reporter and disclosed that she knew he worked for a newspaper. She had learned of his occupation from a worker in a state school insurance agency. Stowe said she also had passed along the reporter's license plate number to police to be checked.

In a telephone interview, Stowe said she had questions about the reporter because he was "being a little secretive." She saw nothing improper in asking police to check his car license plate.

"I wanted to find out who the heck he was and why he was playing games with us," she said.

The district provided its budget, which contained Stowe's salary. Stowe declined to provide employment contracts that would show individual salaries of principals, coaches and the athletic director. She contended those documents were confidential personnel records.

Al Lama, director of the civil division in the attorney general's office, said salaries of school employees, including teachers, were subject to disclosure. Employment contracts, if they contained only factual material such as pay and job duties, should be open to public inspection.

In Clayton, Magistrate David Kyea was "very helpful and professional" and spent time with a citizen explaining the information in the requested court files. At one point, a court employee asked why the person wanted the information. Kyea immediately corrected the worker, saying people were not required to give any reason for wanting public records.

Santa Fe County loaned out a copy of its budget for a few days to permit a person to make photocopies at a cheaper rate than the 50 cents a page the county would have charged. Employees also helped guide the person through the financial document to better understand what was in it.

Computerized information can create special challenges for people seeking public records. At the magistrate court in Socorro, it took two visits to gain access to a list of case filings. A receptionist said requested court information could be obtained on a Web site for the state court system. After being unable to get the desired information on the Web site, the person was given access to written records on a second visit to the court.

Asked why the written records were not made available on the first visit, the same employee said the court "usually only gives that information to businesses" and refers other people to the Web site.

In Grants, the Cibola County Sheriff's Department denied access to a person asking to look at the daily crime log. The person repeatedly was asked why she wanted the information and where she worked. "If you just want to see ... what's going on, you can see it in the newspaper on Wednesday and Thursday," the department employee said.

How the law works for access to public record

Details about the state Inspection of Public Records Act:

Oral or written requests can be made for records from state and local governmental offices.

Penalties apply only to failure to respond to a written request. A government agency can't ignore an oral request to inspect documents, but time limits in the law apply only to a written request.

The "records custodian" or governmental body can require a written request with the name, address and telephone number of the person seeking the information. A person isn't required to give a reason for wanting to see or copy the record.

A government agency must respond to a written request immediately if possible, but in no less than 15 calendar days.

If access isn't provided within three business days, the agency must explain in writing when the records will be available or when it will respond.

Actual costs of copying up to \$1 per page can be charged for copying documents 11 inches by 17 inches or smaller.

Public records are far more than written documents. The law defines them as "all documents, papers, letters, books, maps, tapes, photographs, recordings and other materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics." That means records stored in computers or transmitted by email, for example.

Some records are exempted from the law and remain confidential, including law enforcement records that reveal confidential sources and documents in personnel or student files containing "matters of opinion" rather than factual information.

Citizens can sue if denied access to records and are entitled to attorney fees, court costs and damages if they win the lawsuit.

People denied access to records should contact the attorney general or a local district attorney. They also can call the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government in Albuquerque: 1-800-284-6634. The attorney general's office can be reached at 505-827-6000, or on the Web at www.ago.state.nm.us.

Attorney General Patricia Madrid's office has published a "compliance guide" to the law to help citizens understand their rights. Copies can be obtained from the office of the attorney general, P.O. Drawer 1508, Santa Fe, NM 87504-1508.

How the public records survey was conducted



Robert Johnson
Executive Director of
the Foundation for
Open Government

The auditors usually were reporters unfamiliar with the particular agency they checked or citizens asked by the newspapers to participate. They made oral and written requests for records from 210 governmental offices and agencies in all 33 counties from July through early November. Under the law, they were not required to identify their occupations or tell their intended use of the records.

Sheriff's departments and police were asked for a daily log of crimes and an "incident report" of a crime.

Counties and cities were asked for a current yearly budget, a recent financial statement, salaries and any monthly expenses of county and city managers.

School districts and colleges were asked for budgets as well as names and salaries of superintendents, principals, coaches and athletic directors. In some cases, school officials' expense reports also were sought.

Magistrate courts were asked for a one-month listing of complaints filed by law enforcement and the disposition of the cases.

Participating newspapers were: Alamogordo Daily News, Albuquerque Journal, The Albuquerque Tribune, Carlsbad Current-Argus, Clovis News-Journal, DeBaca County News (Fort Sumner), El Defensor Chieftain (Socorro), The (Farmington) Daily Times, (Gallup) Independent, Hobbs News-Sun, Las Cruces Sun-News, Las Vegas Daily Optic, Los Alamos Monitor, Raton Range, Rio Grande Sun (Española), Rio Rancho Observer, Roswell Daily Record, Ruidoso News, Sangre de Cristo Chronicle (Angel Fire), The Santa Fe New Mexican, Silver City Daily Press & Independent, Taos News and Valencia County News-Bulletin (Belen).

Public access survey by county and office

Results of a public records survey sponsored by newspapers of the New Mexico Press Association and The Associated Press along with the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government.

Surveyed offices are listed by each county. "Yes" means access was provided to requested records; "Partial" means only some of the records were provided. "No" means the records request was denied or the materials were not available for some other reason, such as a supervisor being unavailable or employees saying they were too busy.

BERNALILLO COUNTY

County: No

Metropolitan Court: No

Albuquerque Public Schools: Yes

University of New Mexico: Yes

Albuquerque TVI: Partial

Bernalillo Public Schools: No

City of Albuquerque: Yes Partial

Sheriff & Albuquerque Police: Yes

CATRON COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
Magistrate Courts: Yes
County: Yes
Reserve Consolidate Schools: Yes
City of Reserve: Yes

CHAVES COUNTY

Police: Yes
Sheriff: No
City of Roswell: Yes
County: Yes
Magistrate Court: No
Roswell School District: Yes

CIBOLA COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Grants Police: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: Yes Partial
Grants School District: Yes
County: Yes Partial

COLFAX COUNTY

Raton Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
County: Yes
City of Raton: No
Magistrate Court: Yes
Raton Public School District: Yes Partial

CURRY COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes Partial
Clovis Police: No
City of Clovis: Yes Partial
County: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Clovis Municipal Schools: No

DE BACA COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes Partial
City of Fort Sumner: Yes
Fort Sumner Municipal Schools: No
County: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes

DONA ANA COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
Las Cruces Police: Yes
Magistrate Court: No
Las Cruces Public Schools: Yes
New Mexico State University: Yes
City of Las Cruces: Yes
County: Yes

EDDY COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court, Carlsbad: Yes
Carlsbad Municipal schools: Yes

Carlsbad Police: Yes

County: Yes

City of Carlsbad: Yes

NMSU Carlsbad campus: Yes

Magistrate Court, Artesia: No

Artesia Public Schools: Yes Partial

City of Artesia: Yes

Artesia Police: Yes

GRANT COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
Silver City Police: No
Western New Mexico University: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: No
County: Yes
City of Silver City: Yes
Silver City Consolidated schools: Yes

GUADALUPE COUNTY

Santa Rosa Police: Yes
County: No
Magistrate Court: Yes
Santa Rosa Public Schools: No

HARDING COUNTY

Mosquero Public Schools: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: No
Sheriff: No
County: Yes

HIDALGO COUNTY

County: Yes
Lordsburg Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
City of Lordsburg: No
Lordsburg Consolidated Schools: No
Magistrate Court: No

LEA COUNTY

Magistrate Court: No
New Mexico Junior College: Yes
City of Hobbs: Yes
County: Yes
City of Tatum: Yes
City of Lovington: Yes
Magistrate Court, Lovington: Yes
Sheriff, Lovington office: Yes
Lovington Police: Yes
Tatum Police: No
Hobbs Municipal Schools: Yes
Tatum Municipal Schools: Yes
Lovington School District: No

LINCOLN COUNTY

Capitan school district: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
City of Capitan: Yes
County: Yes

Capitan Police: No
Carrizozo School District: Yes
City of Carrizozo: Yes
Carrizozo Police: Yes
Magistrate Court, Carrizozo: Yes
Ruidoso Municipal schools: Yes
Magistrate Court, Ruidoso: Yes Partial
Ruidoso Police: Yes Partial
City of Ruidoso: Yes
Ruidoso Downs Police: Yes
City of Ruidoso Downs: Yes

LOS ALAMOS COUNTY

Magistrate Court: Yes
Los Alamos School District: Yes
Sheriff: No
County: No

LUNA COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Deming Police: No
City of Deming: No
Magistrate Court: Yes
Deming Public Schools: No
County: Yes

MCKINLEY COUNTY

Magistrate Court: Yes
Sheriff: No
Gallup School District: No
Gallup Police: No

MORA COUNTY

Sheriff: No
County: Yes
Mora Independent Schools: Yes

OTERO COUNTY

Alamogordo Police-Dept of Public Safety: No
Alamogordo Public Schools: Yes
Sheriff: No
County: No
Magistrate Court: No
City of Alamogordo: Yes

QUAY COUNTY

Magistrate Court: Yes
Tucumcari School District: No
Sheriff: No
Tucumcari Police: Yes
City of Tucumcari: No

RIO ARriba COUNTY

City of Espanola: No
Magistrate Court: No
Espanola School District: No
Sheriff: No

ROOSEVELT COUNTY

City of Portales: Yes
Portales Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Portales Public Schools: Yes

SAN JUAN COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Bloomfield Police: No
Aztec Police: No
Farmington Police: No
City of Farmington: Yes
City of Aztec: Yes
County: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court, Aztec: Yes
Central Consolidated Schools: Yes Partial
Aztec Municipal Schools: Yes Partial
Farmington School District: Yes
Bloomfield School District: No
San Juan College: No
Magistrate Court, Farmington: Yes

SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

County: No
Las Vegas Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
City of Las Vegas: Yes
Magistrate Court: No
West Las Vegas School District: Yes Partial
Las Vegas City School District: Yes
New Mexico Highlands University: Yes

SANDOVAL COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Rio Rancho Public Schools: No
County: Yes
Bernalillo Police: Yes
Magistrate Court: No

SANTA FE COUNTY

Santa Fe Public Schools: Yes Partial
City of Santa Fe: Yes
Santa Fe Police: Yes Partial
Sheriff: Yes Partial
County: Yes
Santa Fe Community College: Yes

SIERRA COUNTY

Truth or Consequences Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
Truth or Consequences School District: Yes
County: Yes

SOCORRO COUNTY

Socorro Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes Partial
County: Yes
City of Socorro: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes

County: No
Magistrate Court: No
City of Alamogordo: Yes

QUAY COUNTY

Magistrate Court: Yes
Tucumcari School District: No
Sheriff: No
Tucumcari Police: Yes
City of Tucumcari: No

RIO ARriba COUNTY

City of Espanola: No
Magistrate Court: No
Espanola School District: No
Sheriff: No

ROOSEVELT COUNTY

City of Portales: Yes
Portales Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Portales Public Schools: Yes

SAN JUAN COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Bloomfield Police: No
Aztec Police: No
Farmington Police: No
City of Farmington: Yes
City of Aztec: Yes
County: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court, Aztec: Yes
Central Consolidated Schools: Yes Partial
Aztec Municipal Schools: Yes Partial
Farmington School District: Yes
Bloomfield School District: No
San Juan College: No
Magistrate Court, Farmington: Yes

SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

County: No
Las Vegas Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
City of Las Vegas: Yes
Magistrate Court: No
West Las Vegas School District: Yes Partial
Las Vegas City School District: Yes
New Mexico Highlands University: Yes

SANDOVAL COUNTY

Sheriff: No
Rio Rancho Public Schools: No
County: Yes
Bernalillo Police: Yes
Magistrate Court: No

SANTA FE COUNTY

Santa Fe Public Schools: Yes Partial
City of Santa Fe: Yes
Santa Fe Police: Yes Partial
Sheriff: Yes Partial
County: Yes
Santa Fe Community College: Yes

SIERRA COUNTY

Truth or Consequences Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes
Truth or Consequences School District: Yes
County: Yes

SOCORRO COUNTY

Socorro Police: Yes
Sheriff: Yes Partial
County: Yes
City of Socorro: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Socorro School District: Yes Partial
New Mexico Tech: Yes

TAOS COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
County: No
City of Taos: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Taos Municipal Schools: Yes Partial

TORRANCE COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
Moriarty Municipal Schools: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: Yes
Estancia Public Schools: Yes Partial
City of Moriarty: Yes
County: Yes
Moriarty Police: Yes

UNION COUNTY

Clayton Public Schools: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: Yes
City of Clayton: No
Clayton Police: No

VALENCIA COUNTY

County: Yes
Los Lunas Police: Yes
Los Lunas School District: Yes
Sheriff: No
Magistrate

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Socorro School District: Yes Partial
New Mexico Tech: Yes

TAOS COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
County: No
City of Taos: Yes
Magistrate Court: Yes
Taos Municipal Schools: Yes Partial

TORRANCE COUNTY

Sheriff: Yes
Moriarty Municipal Schools: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: Yes
Estancia Public Schools: Yes Partial
City of Moriarty: Yes
County: Yes
Moriarty Police: Yes

UNION COUNTY

Clayton Public Schools: Yes Partial
Magistrate Court: Yes
City of Clayton: No
Clayton Police: No

VALENCIA COUNTY

County: Yes
Los Lunas Police: Yes
Los Lunas School District: Yes
Sheriff: No
Magistrate

Results of other states' public records surveys

ARKANSAS: Almost 39 percent of requested documents weren't provided during initial walk-in visits to 300 state, county, city and school offices. Second visits were done when possible the same day to offices that initially refused access to records. A group of newspapers conducted the survey in 1999.

COLORADO: A third of 364 records requests in all 63 counties were unsuccessful. Sheriffs and police denied one out of every five requests for their records. School districts were the most willing to release records, providing documents three out of four times within 72 hours. Newspapers of the Colorado Press Association and The Associated Press organized the survey this year.

CONNECTICUT: Eighty percent of 508 public agencies in Connecticut would not provide requested records, including marriage license applications, teacher attendance records or police arrest logs. The state Freedom of Information Commission and the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government Inc. conducted the survey in 1999.

ILLINOIS: Almost two-thirds of local officials refused to release public information immediately. More than a quarter of the time, Illinois officials never provided the information even when given two weeks to do so as permitted under state law. Newspapers conducted the survey in 1999.

INDIANA: Sixty-six of 92 county sheriff's departments (72 percent) in Indiana denied access to crime reports; 50 of them (54 percent) refused to release crime logs. In response to the survey, Gov. Frank O'Bannon formed a task force to review the state's public records law and in 1999 changes were enacted. The governor had administratively created the post of "public access counselor" and that was made part of state law. Seven Indiana newspapers conducted the survey.

KANSAS: Of 420 requests for public records, only 35 were flatly denied. Sheriffs accounted for most of the refusals, 29 of 105 county offices. Newspapers conducted the statewide survey in 1999.

NORTH CAROLINA: A third of records requests were rejected by law enforcement, city, county and school officials. Two police agencies ran car license plate checks of reporters who refused to disclose their identities. One of the reporters was detained while police scrutinized his car insurance. The North Carolina Press Association and the North Carolina Associated Press News Council conducted the survey in 1999.

OKLAHOMA: One in four city and county law enforcement agencies did not comply with requests for public documents, such as arrest records. The Daily Oklahoman and the Tulsa World conducted the survey this year along with the Oklahoma Press Association and Freedom of Information Oklahoma Inc.

VIRGINIA: Forty-two percent of requests to local governmental offices and schools failed. Sheriffs and police departments refused to provide a crime log or crime report 84 percent of the time. Newspapers conducted the survey in 1998.

WISCONSIN: More than half of the state's 72 sheriff's departments failed to release an arrest list. The Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council conducted the survey last year.

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