

Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law (RTKL) Training Handout

What is RTKL?

Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law allows citizens to request access to public records from government agencies.

Step-by-Step Process

- 1 1. Identify the agency that holds the records.
- 2 2. Find the Open Records Officer (ORO).
- 3 3. Write a clear, specific request.
- 4 4. Submit via email, mail, or in person.
- 5 5. Wait for a response (5 business days).
- 6 6. Review response (approved, denied, or extended).
- 7 7. File an appeal within 15 business days if denied.

Sample Request Template

Subject: Right-to-Know Request
To: Open Records Officer

Pursuant to the Pennsylvania Right-to-Know Law, I am requesting access to the following records:
[Describe records clearly]

Please provide records in electronic format if available.

If denied, please cite the legal basis.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]

Best Practices

- 1 Be specific with dates, names, and topics.
- 2 Request documents, not answers to questions.
- 3 Keep language professional and neutral.

- 4 Break large requests into smaller ones.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- 1 Vague requests (e.g., 'all emails').
- 2 Asking questions instead of requesting records.
- 3 Overly broad timeframes.
- 4 Emotional or argumentative language.

RTKL Filing Checklist

Use this checklist before submitting your request:

- 1 ■ I identified the correct agency.
- 2 ■ I located the Open Records Officer (ORO).
- 3 ■ My request is specific (dates, names, subject).
- 4 ■ I am requesting records, not asking questions.
- 5 ■ I included my contact information.
- 6 ■ I requested electronic copies if available.
- 7 ■ I kept a copy of my request.
- 8 ■ I submitted via email or trackable method.

After submission:

- 1 ■ I marked my calendar for 5 business days.
- 2 ■ I reviewed the response carefully.
- 3 ■ I noted any denial reasons cited.
- 4 ■ I tracked any extension (up to 30 days).

If denied:

- 1 ■ I prepared an appeal within 15 business days.
- 2 ■ I included my original request and denial.
- 3 ■ I explained why the denial is incorrect.
- 4 ■ I submitted appeal to the Office of Open Records.