

# FOIA Redaction Workshop

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## Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities to Redact

Time

- Needed to consult with subject matter experts
- Search, prepare, review, copy, redact electronically, double-check work, release, & post to 'net

Understanding/Comprehension

- Knowledge level of FOI, case law, internal regs & policy, subject matter expertise, training or mentoring

Work Habits

- Ability to focus, understand, research, consult, work autonomously & make supportable decisions (with appropriate documentation)

Position

- Supervisor, mentor, trainee, search only, quality control

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## "Proper" FOIA Requests

Only needs to "reasonably describe" records sought

May process under both FOIA & Privacy Act

Submitted per your agency regulations

Doesn't have to be labeled "FOI request"

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## Statutory Redaction Requirements

- ▶ Make a reasonable effort to estimate the volume of redactions, and
- ▶ Clearly identify the location & extent of all redactions, and
- ▶ Release segregable portions of records, and
- ▶ Insert the exemption which supports the redaction at the site of each redaction.

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## Posting Redacted Records

### The “Rule of 3” is Codified for Frequently Requested Records:

- Agencies required to “make available for public inspection in an electronic format,” records “that have been requested 3 or more times.”
- Proactive posting is also encouraged.

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## Best Practices

### Negotiate with Requesters

- Clarify or modify a request
- Narrow scope of request, if possible
- Document all revisions in cover letter/email

### Making Redactions

- Don't begin making redactions if request is unclear
- Take reasonable steps to release non-exempt information

### Discretionary Release

- Speculative or abstract fears are insufficient grounds to withhold a record
- Foreseeable Harm Test

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**Not All Exemptions are Eligible for Discretionary Release**

No discretion for exemptions 1, 3, 4, 6, 7C, 7D

If you reasonably foresee that disclosure would harm a protected interest, an agency may use discretion to withhold records under Ex. 2, 5, parts of 7, 8, & 9

Maintain an administrative record

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**Redaction Issues:  
Checking Your Work Before Release**

- ✓ >Equities in other agencies, requiring coordination prior to redaction/release?
- ▶ >Understand mandatory withholding vs discretionary withholding, & redact using foreseeable harm test
- ▶ >Use technology - email, CDs, DVDs, etc.
- ▶ >Posting to Internet, in compliance with section 508 of Americans with Disabilities Act

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**Non-Standard Redactions  
(\*Note Possible Privacy Act Implications\*)**

- Video & audio tapes\*
- Microfiche
- WAVE files (voice mail messages) NARA: <http://www.archives.gov/records/mgmt/email.mgmt.html>
- Biometric indicators\*
- Photographs\*
- PDFs

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UNCLASSIFIED

QUESTIONS ?????

UNCLASSIFIED

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