

Accessing your WA public health records through the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)

Under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA), you have the right to access your medical records held by public hospitals or public health service providers (e.g. community mental health services). Hospitals and health service providers manage their own patient records. This means that to access your medical records, you will need to directly contact the hospital or health service provider where you were a patient.

What are the requirements for a valid Freedom of Information request?

- Requests must be in writing
 - No special form is required – a letter will do. We have included a template letter in this guide. The service may have an application form that you can use if you wish.
- Give enough information to identify the documents you are seeking
 - e.g. your full name including previous names (if applicable) and date of birth, date of attendance and service unit.
 - You can even request specific types of documents (e.g. clinical notes, test results, referrals, reports, discharge summaries, admission forms).
- Provide an Australian address for notices to be sent.
- Your phone number and email address to help the service to contact you if necessary.
- Copies of one or two forms of ID that may need to be certified.

Template FOI request:

Dear **[Health Service Name]**,

I am writing to request access to information held about me under the Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA).

I would like a copy of my health records from [name of service or ward] between **[insert time period, e.g. “January 2023 to March 2024”]**. This may include **[type of documents you are seeking, e.g. clinical notes, assessments, reports, and any correspondence]**.

My full name: **[Insert your name]**

Date of birth: **[Insert DOB]**

Postal address: **[Australian postal address]**

I have attached a copy of my photo identification. If you need any more information, please contact me via **[phone number]** or **[email address]**.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Where do I send my request?

Each public health service has a FOI Office that [processes these requests. Scan this QR code or click here for a list of all FOI contacts at WA Health public hospitals and health services.](#)



How long will it take?

You should receive a response within 45 calendar days. If it takes longer or you don't hear back, you should follow up with the service.

How much will it cost?

There are no fees to access your own personal medical records held by a WA public health service.

Will my information be redacted?

Information that is about someone else may be redacted or blacked out, including names of health professionals. You can specifically request names of health professionals if this is the information you need.

Access to medical and psychiatric information

If a document includes medical or psychiatric information about you, and the service believes that reading it could seriously harm your mental or physical health, they don't have to give it to you directly. Instead, they can give it to a qualified person you choose (in writing), like your doctor or psychologist. The agency can wait to release the document until you nominate someone they agree is suitably qualified.

Can the service refuse my request?

There are some circumstances where a service provider is entitled to refuse your request to access. If this happens, you should contact the service's FOI office to ask why the request was refused and if there is anything further you can do to change their decision before you make an official appeal.

If you disagree with a decision made relating to your FOI request

If you disagree with a decision made about your access application, you have the right to apply for review of that decision.

In most cases you can apply to the agency for an internal review. If you disagree with the internal review decision, or if an internal review is not available to you, you can apply to the Information Commissioner for external review of the decision.

A note from our Advocacy Team

CoMHWA is a lived experience organisation. That means our staff have lived or living experience of mental health challenges or distress. We recognise that accessing your medical records can bring up a mix of emotions, especially when they relate to mental health treatment. For some people, reading their notes can be insightful. It can help make sense of past decisions and offer a clearer understanding of the care they received. For others, it can be confronting, confusing, or even painful. Many consumers find that Emergency Department notes in particular capture some of the most difficult days of their lives — often written by clinicians who only saw them in a moment of crisis or distress. It's not uncommon to disagree with how those experiences were recorded. No matter what is written in your records, it's important to remember: you are the expert in your own experience, and you are far more than what appears in your file.

If you choose to read your records, do it in a way that feels safe for you. That might mean waiting until you're further along in your recovery journey, reading them with a friend or family member, or asking a trusted person (like a psychologist or advocate) to go through them first and share a summary. There's no right or wrong way to do it. Your wellbeing matters most.

An advocate can help you understand and exercise your rights. If you need advocacy assistance, contact CoMHWA's advocacy team on (08) 9258 8911



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**Consumers of
Mental Health WA**
Listen. Advocate. Change.