

Appendix B

Your Right to Access Government Data: Guide for Members of the Public

Right to Access Public Data

The Government Data Practices Act (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13) gives you, and other members of the public, the right to look at and get copies of all public data kept by government agencies. The law also controls how government agencies keep documents, records and other data and what they can tell you when you ask to see the data that they have. “Government data” is a term that means all recorded information a government agency keeps, including paper records and documents, e-mail, CD-ROMs, photographs, and so on.

The law says that all the data government agencies have are **public** (can be seen by anybody) *unless* there is a state or federal law that classifies the data as not public.

The law also states that all government records and data must be kept in a way that makes it easy for you, as a member of the public, to access public data. You have the right to look at (inspect), free of charge, all public data that the court keeps. You also have the right to get copies of public data that the court keeps. The WCCA does not charge a fee for a reasonable amount of copying.

How to Make a Data Request

You may make a request for data kept by the WCCA by mail, telephone, fax, e-mail, or in person. Your request should include:

- that you, as a member of the public, are making a request for data under the Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13;
- whether you would like to inspect (look at) the data, get copies of the data, or both; and
- a description of the data you would like to inspect or have copied. Describe the data you are requesting as specifically as possible.

The WCCA cannot require you, as a member of the public, to identify yourself or explain why you want the data. However, depending on how you want us to respond to your request (if, for example, you want us to send you copies of the data), we will need some information about how to contact you. If you choose not to give us any identifying information, you are responsible for contacting the WCCA to check on the status of your request. In addition, please keep in mind that if we do not understand your request and have no way to contact you, we will not be able to begin processing your request.

How We Respond to a Data Request

We will begin working on your request as soon as possible after receiving it.

- If we do not understand what data you want to look at or copy, we will ask for more information to help us understand exactly what you are asking for.

- The WCCA does not have to give you data the agency does not keep. If we do not have the data, we will notify you as soon as is reasonably possible. You may ask to have our response in writing.
- If we have the data, but the data are not public, we will notify you as soon as reasonably possible. You have the right to know why you can't see or have copies of data that are not public. If the data is not public, the WCCA must tell you the specific state statute or federal law that makes the data not public. You may ask to have our response stated in writing.
- If we have the data and the data are public, we will respond to your request appropriately and promptly, within a reasonable amount of time by doing one of the following:
 - arrange a date and time (during business hours) to inspect data at the WCCA office if your request is to look at the data.
 - provide you with copies of the data as soon as reasonably possible. You may choose to pick up your copies, or we will mail or fax them to you. If you want us to send you the copies, you will need to give us an address or fax number.
 - We will provide electronic copies by e-mail upon request if we keep the data in electronic format and can reasonably provide the data in that format. The WCCA does not have to provide the data in a format that is different from the format in which the agency keeps the data.

You have the right to have public data explained to you in a way you understand. If you do not understand some of the data (technical terms, abbreviations, or acronyms - like "WCCA"), ask us what it means.

The Data Practices Act does not require the WCCA to create or collect new data in response to a request if we do not already have the data, or to provide data in a specific form or arrangement if we do not keep the data in that form or arrangement. (For example, if the data you request are on paper only, we are not required to create electronic documents to respond to your request. Or if the data you want is contained in many different records, we are not required to compile it (put it together) for you.) If we agree to create data in response to your request, we will work with you on the details of your request, including cost and response time.

In addition, the Data Practices Act does not require us to answer questions that are not requests for data.

Requests for Summary Data

Summary data are statistical records or reports. Summary data does not contain identifiable private or confidential data. If you want summary data prepared for you, you must make a request in writing and you may have to pay the cost of preparing the data. Upon receiving your written request we will respond within ten business days with the data or details of when the data will be ready and how much we will charge.

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**To get more information or
to make a request to see or get copies of data the WCCA keeps, contact:**

**Minnesota Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals
25 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101**

**Telephone: (651) 539-1210 • Fax: (651) 539-1212
E-mail: wcca.mail@state.mn.us**

Responsible Authority:
Patricia J. Milun, Chief Judge

This document is required by Minnesota Statutes, § 13.025, subdivision 2.