



Administrative Office of the Courts

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Supreme Court of Kentucky adopts Open Records Policy for court system's administrative records

— AOC also offering media expanded electronic access to court records —

FRANKFORT, Ky., August 11, 2017 — The Supreme Court of Kentucky has approved an [Open Records Policy](#) that guides how the public accesses the administrative records of the state court system. The seven [Supreme Court justices](#) voted unanimously to adopt the policy, which will take effect Aug. 15, 2017.

This is the first Open Records Policy for the Administrative Office of the Courts, the operations arm of the court system. The policy is in the form of an Administrative Procedure of the Court of Justice, which carries the weight of law under the Kentucky Constitution.

The news comes in conjunction with the announcement that the AOC will offer [CourtNet 2.0 subscriptions](#) to media outlets statewide starting Sept. 1. CourtNet 2.0 is an AOC program that provides near real-time, online access to Kentucky civil and criminal case information. With CourtNet 2.0, reporters can search court documents from their computers without making a trip to the courthouse. The AOC invited several media outlets to subscribe to CourtNet 2.0 during a pilot project and is now ready to offer the service to media outlets throughout Kentucky. The AOC will email an invitation to subscribe to CourtNet 2.0 to media outlets throughout the commonwealth on Sept. 1.

“Transparency and accountability are bedrock principles in maintaining trust in state government,” Chief Justice of Kentucky John D. Minton Jr. said. “While the Judicial Branch has long complied with the spirit of the Open Records Act, it was time to formalize our commitment into written policy.”

“This is an important step for the Supreme Court,” said Jon L. Fleischaker, an attorney with Dinsmore & Shohl’s Louisville office who has more than 40 years of experience in media law and First Amendment cases. “By establishing its own policy, the Judicial Branch demonstrates its commitment to transparency while preserving the separation of powers in state government. I’ve been looking forward to the day the public has definitive guidance on how to access the court system’s administrative records.”

The head of the Kentucky Press Association also welcomed this news. “On behalf of our member newspapers across the commonwealth, I want to commend the Supreme Court for ensuring public access to the records of the AOC,” said David T. Thompson, longtime executive director of the KPA.

Process to Submit an Open Records Request

The [Open Records Policy](#) describes how to submit an open records request to the AOC’s records custodian. Individuals can email a request to openrecords@kycourts.net. The AOC will respond within three business days regarding its decision to comply with or deny the request.

As part of its efforts to be accountable to Kentucky taxpayers, the AOC also provides Judicial Branch salary data and financial expenditures on transparency.ky.gov, the commonwealth’s government spending website.

Court Case Records Already Public Documents

Court case records have always been considered public record unless made confidential by statute or ordered to be sealed by a judge. Therefore, the Open Records Policy for the AOC does not apply to records of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Circuit Court or District Court. Court records for the trial courts – Circuit Court and District Court – are available from the [Office of Circuit Court Clerk](#) in each of the 120 counties. [Kentucky Court of Appeals](#) court records are available from Clerk of the Court Samuel P. Givens Jr. at 502-573-7920. [Supreme Court of Kentucky](#) court records can be requested from Clerk of the Court Susan Stokley Clary at 502-564-5444.

About CourtNet 2.0

CourtNet 2.0 was developed in-house by programmers in the AOC Department of Information & Technology Services. The staggered statewide implementation of CourtNet 2.0, which replaced CourtNet 1.0, began in 2013. Today CourtNet 2.0 has nearly 6,000 users and is available to members of the Kentucky Bar Association; justices, judges, circuit court clerks and court personnel in the Judicial Branch; and all agencies in the Executive and Legislative branches. Law enforcement agencies will be the last group of CourtNet 1.0 users to transition to CourtNet 2.0.

Kentucky Judicial Branch

The chief justice of Kentucky is the administrative head of the state court system and is responsible for its operation. As the administrative arm of the court system, the AOC supports

the activities of nearly 3,400 court system employees and 404 elected justices, judges and circuit court clerks. The AOC also works closely with the chief justice to fulfill the Judicial Branch's statutory duties, which include serving as the fiscal agent for the courts; providing oversight and management of court facilities; maintaining data processing systems; dispersing supplies and equipment; administering personnel policies and payroll; overseeing statewide programs such as Juvenile Services, Pretrial Services and Specialty Courts; and offering educational programs for judges, circuit court clerks and support staff.

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