

## **Innovative Approach to Case Management Aids Anne Arundel's Compliance with the PIA**

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Anne Arundel County, Maryland provides individuals a user-friendly process for making requests for County records. As an illustration, about one year ago, the County implemented a "Case Management" type system that provides individuals access to an online request form to make requests for County records. All of the County's departments are part of this records request system.

To make a records request, a requestor selects the "Public Information Request" button on the County's website <http://www.aacounty.org/departments/county-executive/public-information-office/>. The requestor then locates the type of records sought from a list of approximately 20 different categories of records, such as ambulance reports, building permits, police reports, subdivision files, and public works agreements. If the requestor does not believe one of the categories of records fits the records sought, the requestor has the option to select "Other." Then, the requestor inputs a description of the records sought and other information including the user's name, address, email address, phone number, an indication of whether the requestor seeks a fee waiver and if so, the reason for the fee waiver request.

Once the requestor submits the online form, it is directed to the designated custodian depending on the type of record requested. For example, if an individual submits a request for subdivision files, the designated custodian for the County's Office of Planning & Zoning receives the request in an email. A request categorized as "Other" is sent to the County's Public Information Act Coordinator, who reviews the request and assigns it to the appropriate departmental custodian(s).

This "Case Management" type system affords many benefits to both the public and the County. The system is easy to use and allows an individual to make a records request without having to determine the appropriate County department or custodian to handle the response. The online form prompts a requestor with the information needed by the County to process the records request and he or she can include as much detail they believe is necessary in the form. From the County's perspective, the system allows each County department to more easily manage records requests, which includes timely responses to requests. The system also allows each County department to more easily track records requests.

The County's implementation of its "Case Management" type system for processing records requests has proven effective in processing approximately 2,000 records requests in the last year. This innovative approach has aided in the County's compliance with the Maryland Public Information Act.

*~This article was submitted by Kemp Hammond, Assistant County Attorney in the Anne Arundel County's Office of Law. Mr. Hammond handles tort and contract litigation matters for the County and acts as the Public Information Act Coordinator for the County, which involves advising County departments regarding Maryland Public Information Act requests. For more information, contact him at [khammond@aacounty.org](mailto:khammond@aacounty.org).*