



Access to Information

In 2002, the government of Jamaica developed the **Access to Information Act (ATI)** that gives the right to Jamaican citizens to have legal right to access and obtain government documents that are not exempt from public view.

The main aim of the **Act** is to ensure:

- ✚ Governmental accountability;
- ✚ transparency; and
- ✚ public participation in the national decision-making process.



WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS UNDER THE ACT?

The Act gives you the legal right to see and get copies of official documents held by Government bodies, other than an exempt document. You may also ask for personal information to be changed if it is incomplete, misleading, out of date, or incorrect.



WHAT ARE OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS?

Official documents are documents in the possession, custody or control of a public authority and which are connected to its functions.



CAN I SEE ALL OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS?

No. There are documents which are exempt from disclosure under the Act. These are documents which it is believed should not be disclosed to protect essential public interests or the private/business affairs of others.



WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DOCUMENTS WHICH ARE EXEMPT FROM DISCLOSURE?

Documents pertaining to:

- Security, defence, international relations
- The Cabinet
- Law enforcement
- Legal privilege
- The national economy
- Government deliberative processes
- Business affairs of others (trade secret, etc)
- Heritage sites
- Personal privacy



HOW DO I MAKE AN ATI REQUEST?

Once you have identified the document you wish to have access to and you believe that it is located at the **Office of the Services Commissions (OSC)**, you may write, telephone, fax or visit the office with your request, giving as much information as possible about the document in order to help the ATI officer assigned to retrieve the document as quickly as possible.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE OSC GETS MY REQUEST?

The ATI officer will:

- Confirm receipt of request
- Inform you that your request is received
- Attend to the application as quickly as possible and inform you of any difficulties being experienced
- Inform you within 30 days of receipt of the application whether or not information will be disclosed and grant access or inform you of your rights of appeal



HOW WILL THE DOCUMENTS BE GIVEN TO ME?

Documents may be given in the form that it is requested. Documents may be:

- Viewed
- Listened to
- Inspected
- Copied

However, access may be given in a form other than requested if there is a need to preserve the document or its physical state.



CAN I HAVE DOCUMENTS ABOUT ME CORRECTED?

Yes, as long as they have been or are being used by the government for an administrative purpose.

You may ask for these corrections to be done in writing, telephone, email, fax or in person.

The application form may be accessed at:

[ati request form.pdf](#)



WHAT APPEAL RIGHTS DO I HAVE UNDER THE ACT?

You have a right to appeal with respect to:

- Refusal of a grant of access
- The grant of access to only some of the documents requested
- Deferral of the grant of access
- Refusal to amend or annotate a personal record
- The charging of, or amount of a fee

Your appeal must be made in writing

You may request either an internal review of a decision that you regard as unfavourable, or you may appeal to the Appeal Tribunal



WHAT ARE THE OFFENCES AND PENALTIES UNDER THE ACT?

Under the Act, a person commits an offence, if he/she:

- Alters or defaces
- Blocks or erases
- Destroys or conceals

an official document to which the public has the right of access, with the intention of preventing its disclosure.

See also:

[Access to Information Act \(2002\)](#)



[Access to Information Regulations \(2003\)](#)



[Cost to Access Information](#)



[Access to Information Website](#)



[Access to Information Request Application Form](#)

