

**Rules Regarding Requests to Inspect Documents of the Mobile County Probate Court under the Alabama Open Records Act—Ala. Code §36-12-40 et seq.**

Under the Alabama law, citizens have a right to inspect public writings. The Mobile County Probate Court has implemented the following policies to facilitate such inspection:

1. Records may only be inspected during normal business hours.
2. Records may not be removed from the division of the Court where they are maintained.
3. The cost of copying records will be at the expense of the citizen utilizing the rates specified by Alabama law and deposit in advance of copying is required. The amount of the deposit to be reasonably determined by the Judge of Probate.
4. Citizens will handle the records with care and avoid causing any damage.
5. Citizens will maintain the order in which the records are kept.
6. While inspecting records, citizens will make every effort to avoid disrupting the normal office operations. This includes refraining from excessive noise and allowing employees use of the copy machine as they need it.
7. If more than one citizen wishes to inspect records at one time, and this cannot be reasonably accommodated, appointments can be made to inspect individually.
8. Only documents that are open for public inspection will be made available. Documents received confidentially, sensitive personnel files, documents that have been sealed by Alabama law or court order, those documents whose disclosure would be against the best interest of the public, and those documents exempted from disclosure pursuant to *Ala. Code* §36-12-40 will not be made available for inspection.
9. Mobile County Probate Court employees are not required to assist you in locating, copying, or indexing records. They are only required to make available the documents that the law requires be made available.
10. The Judge of Probate, in his sole discretion, may require an employee of the Court to be physically present if any paper documents are being examined. In such instance, the Mobile County Probate Court will require payment of reasonable expenses related to such staff person being present. The Judge of Probate may require a deposit to cover such costs in advance of the documents being made available.
11. Mobile County Probate Court staff will not produce records via electronic transfer of data (*i.e.* emailing or saving documents to a portable device).

NOTE: Many Mobile County Probate Court records are available through free, online access. The Internet website's address is: [www.probate.mobilecountyal.gov](http://www.probate.mobilecountyal.gov). Mobile County Probate Court staff can provide you with instructions regarding how to obtain this access. Mobile County Probate Court is not required to assist you with online searches of those documents.

