

***City and County Level***

Type of General File to be Found	Level of Access You Might Find or Restrictions
(Remember each city and county government has different levels of allowable access, reflected only broadly in this general table.)	
1. Assignments (lien, judgment, etc.)	1. Access generally no problem
2. Bankruptcy	2. Access generally no problem
3. Birth	3. Access generally no problem, cross references available sometimes by date or name
4. Business license (city level)	4. Access generally no problem
5. Criminal case filings and complete court records	5. Access generally no problem (must have case number which can sometimes be found at municipal or superior court filing offices, then go to the records room for the actual file)
6. Civil litigation case filings and complete court records	6. Access generally no problem (must have case number which can sometimes be found at municipal or superior court filing offices, then go to the records room for the actual file)
7. Death	7. Access generally no problem
8. Deeds (county recorders office)	8. Access generally no problem
9. Easement	9. Access generally no problem
10. Fictitious business names	10. Access generally no problem
11. Marriage	11. Access generally no problem
12. Pet, hunting, and fishing licenses (city level)	12. Local laws apply
13. Power of attorneys	13. Access generally no problem
14. Property ownership (county recorders office and can be cross checked by tax assessors office)	14. Access generally no problem
15. Probate court filings and complete court records	15. Access generally no problem
16. Marriage separation and divorce	16. Access generally no problem
17. Small claims court	17. Access generally no problem (must have case number which can sometimes be found at municipal or superior court filing offices, then go to the records room for the actual file)
18. Tax assessment and payment	18. Access generally no problem
19. Voter's Registration	Sometimes restricted for political purposes only, but will provide name, address, telephone number, oftentimes occupation, and additional information – this is the record a lot of professional PI's use

### *State Records*

State records represent an outstanding resource, and they are the only source of comprehensive, statewide research information. Some of the state information is available directly from state offices. However, because I want you to be able to solve research cases within hours, let me describe the practical access you may have to these records.

Once again, this is not a complete listing of information, but it is a compilation of the most often used and discussed records. I don't want to burden you with a compendium of all the records. But I want you to become an expert on the common records. At the state level, records are generally more restricted than at local government offices. Why is this? Simply because state governments generally place greater control over records as they go from file to compilation form. In other words, access to a list of everything is more limited than is access to a single file (even though the file provides more information).

<i>State Level</i>	
Type of General File to be Found	Level of Access You Might Find or Restrictions
(Remember, again, each state government has varying levels of allowable access, but this table reflects general practice.)	
1. Bankruptcy (at court level)	1. Access generally no problem
2. Birth	2. Some restrictions apply; generally approval of parties is needed
3. Business license	3. Access generally no problem
4. Criminal case filings and complete court records	4. Access generally no problem (again, must have case number which can sometimes be found at municipal or superior court filing offices, then go to the records room for the actual file)
5. Civil litigation case filings and complete court records	5. Access generally no problem (must have case number which can sometimes be found at municipal or superior court filing offices, then go to the records room for the actual file)
6. Death	6. Access generally no problem
7. Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)	7. Access generally restricted (some states have few or no limitations)
8. Divorce	8. Some restrictions apply
9. Fictitious business names	9. Access generally no problem
10. Marriage	10. Some restrictions apply
11. Professional Licensing	11. Access generally no problem
12. Tax, Business (only, no personal records)	12. Access generally no problem
13. Uniform Commercial Code (UCC)	13. Access generally no problem (provides associations to business activity by name)
14. University or colleges	14. Some restrictions

### *US Government Records*

The key phrase here is “Freedom of Information Act.” While these federal records are somewhat interesting and provide some military and other records, access takes time. A long wait is often the rule. Court records are available by going into the federal courthouses directly.

<i>US Government Level</i>	
Type of General File to be Found	Level of Access You Might Find or Restrictions
1. Bankruptcy (Federal court level)	1. Access generally no problem
2. Criminal case filings and complete court records (Federal court level)	2. Access generally no problem (must have case number)
3. Civil litigation case filings and complete court records (Federal court level)	3. Access generally no problem (must have case number)
4. Social Security Administration	4. 1-800-772-1213, will confirm if individual is living or dead and will forward a letter (you must have the Social Security number)
5. Inmate Locator Line	5. Public Information, Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice, 320 1st St., NW, Room 64, Washington, DC 20536 (202) 307-3198 or the hotline at (202) 307-3126
6. U.S. Army Active Personnel Locator	6. U.S. Department of the Army, Worldwide Locator, EREC, Ft. Benjamin Harrison, IN 46249-5301 (317) 542-4211 (limited service provided)
7. Bureau of Naval Personnel	7. Navy Department, Washington, DC 20370 (limited service provided)
8. U.S. Marine Corps	8. Headquarters, Washington, DC 20380 (limited service provided)
9. U.S. Air Force	9. Airmen Records Annex, Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, TX 78291 (limited service provided)
10. U.S. Department of Transportation	10. U.S. Coast Guard, 400 7th Street SW, Washington, DC 20590 (limited service provided)
11. Army Discharged Personnel Locator Service	11. National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5200 (314) 538-4201 (limited service provided)
12. Army Personnel Locator	12. U.S. Army Worldwide Locator, ELREC, Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN 46249-5301 (317) 542-4211 (limited service provided)
13. Military Records	13. National Personnel Records Center Military Personnel Records 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 62132-5100 or e-mail at <a href="mailto:center@stlouis.nara.gov">center@stlouis.nara.gov</a>
14. Army Reserve Personnel Center	14. U.S. Department of the Army, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5200 (314) 538-3828 (limited service provided)

