

Public Notice *Resource Center*

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Public Notices Belong in Newspapers

What is a Public Notice?

A public notice informs citizens of government or government related activities that affect citizens' everyday lives. A public notice typically has four elements:

- **INDEPENDENT:** A public notice is published in a forum independent of the government, typically in a local newspaper.
- **ARCHIVABLE:** A public notice is archived in a secure and publicly available format.
- **ACCESSIBLE:** A public notice is capable of being accessed by all segments of society.
- **VERIFIABLE:** The public and the source of the notice are able to verify that the notice was published, usually by an affidavit provided by the publisher.

Why Publish Public Notices in Newspapers?

- **Newspapers are experts in public notices and the community relies on finding notices in newspapers.** Newspapers have been printing public notices for over 200 years. By mastering the process of publishing a notice, newspapers provide a valuable public service at a low cost.
- **Newspapers are a single, convenient location for notices.** Newspapers, many of which now publish their notices online and in print, offer wide access to a broad range of people in different demographic circles. Whether accessed at a school, local library, coffee shop or in the comfort of one's own home, the newspaper can be read at any time of the day.
- **Newspapers authenticate notice.** Newspapers serve as an authentic printed record of publication and provide sworn affidavits that ads were published along with physical proof. Newspapers can prove that a public notice has been properly run according to law to satisfy due process requirements. Electronic media—broadcast or online—present serious challenges to due process authentication, and make public actions vulnerable in litigation.
- **Technical notices should be in writing.** Many public notices are written in precise legal language that may require more than one reading for comprehension. Foreclosure notices, unclaimed property notices and tax sale notices can present difficult and technical language that will not be easily understood over the airwaves.