

SEARCH WARRANTS

General Information

Employees, who receive a search warrant, should immediately contact the Office of General Counsel. **(Phone: 202-885-3285, Fax: 202-885-3273, Email: Lawyers@american.edu).**

This webpage outlines the steps university employees should follow when presented with a search warrant. The information is provided as general guidance only and is not to be substituted for the Office of General Counsel's legal advice.

What is a Search Warrant?

A search warrant is an order signed by a judge that authorizes police officers or law enforcement agents to search for specific objects or materials at a definite location at a specified time. Police officers and law enforcement agents obtain warrants by convincing a judge or magistrate that they have "probable cause" to believe that criminal activity is occurring at the place to be searched or that evidence of a crime may be found there.

What Should I Do With a Search Warrant?

If a law enforcement agent appears with a search warrant and attempts to serve it, you should:

- (1) Verify the person's government credentials. You should document the agent's name, agency and phone number, date, time and the information requested.
- (2) Inform the agent that you are contacting the Office of General Counsel to review the legal sufficiency of the search warrant. You should request that the agent not proceed until an attorney from the Office of General Counsel arrives.
- (3) Immediately contact the Office of General Counsel at 202-885-3285 and inform the Office that you have been served with a search warrant.
- (4) If the agent refuses to wait before executing the search warrant, you should still contact the Office of General Counsel.

If you have any additional questions, please contact the Office of General Counsel at **202-885-3285**, **Fax: 202-885-3273**, or Email: Lawyers@american.edu.