



Ohio Revised Code

Section 2981.11 Care of property in law enforcement custody.

Effective: April 9, 2025

Legislation: House Bill 331

(A)(1) Any property that has been lost, abandoned, stolen, seized pursuant to a search warrant, or otherwise lawfully seized or forfeited and that is in the custody of a law enforcement agency shall be kept safely by the agency, pending the time it no longer is needed as evidence or for another lawful purpose, and shall be disposed of pursuant to sections 2981.12 and 2981.13 of the Revised Code.

(2) This chapter does not apply to the custody and disposal of any of the following:

(a) Vehicles subject to forfeiture under Title XLV of the Revised Code, except as provided in division (A)(6) of section 2981.12 of the Revised Code;

(b) Abandoned junk motor vehicles or other property of negligible value;

(c) Property held by a department of rehabilitation and correction institution that is unclaimed, that does not have an identified owner, that the owner agrees to dispose of, or that is identified by the department as having little value;

(d) Animals taken, and devices used in unlawfully taking animals, under section 1531.20 of the Revised Code;

(e) Controlled substances sold by a peace officer in the performance of the officer's official duties under section 3719.141 of the Revised Code;

(f) Property recovered by a township law enforcement agency under sections 505.105 to 505.109 of the Revised Code;

(g) Property held and disposed of under an ordinance of the municipal corporation or under sections 737.29 to 737.33 of the Revised Code, except that a municipal corporation that has received notice of a citizens' reward program as provided in division (F) of section 2981.12 of the Revised Code and



disposes of property under an ordinance shall pay twenty-five per cent of any moneys acquired from any sale or auction to the citizens' reward program.

(B)(1) Each law enforcement agency that has custody of any property that is subject to this section shall adopt and comply with a written internal control policy that does all of the following:

(a) Provides for keeping detailed records as to the amount of property acquired by the agency and the date property was acquired;

(b) Provides for keeping detailed records of the disposition of the property, which shall include, but not be limited to, both of the following:

(i) The manner in which it was disposed, the date of disposition, detailed financial records concerning any property sold, and the name of any person who received the property. The record shall not identify or enable identification of the individual officer who seized any item of property.

(ii) An itemized list of the specific expenditures made with amounts that are gained from the sale of the property and that are retained by the agency, including the specific amount expended on each expenditure, except that the policy shall not provide for or permit the identification of any specific expenditure that is made in an ongoing investigation.

(c) Complies with section 2981.13 of the Revised Code if the agency has a law enforcement trust fund or similar fund created under that section.

(2) The records kept under the internal control policy shall be open to public inspection during the agency's regular business hours. The policy adopted under this section is a public record open for inspection under section 149.43 of the Revised Code.

(C) A law enforcement agency with custody of property to be disposed of under section 2981.12 or 2981.13 of the Revised Code shall make a reasonable effort to locate persons entitled to possession of the property, to notify them of when and where it may be claimed, and to return the property to them at the earliest possible time. In the absence of evidence identifying persons entitled to possession, it is sufficient notice to advertise using at least one of the following methods:



- (1) In the print or digital edition of a newspaper of general circulation in the county;
- (2) On the official public notice web site established under section 125.182 of the Revised Code;
- (3) On the web site and social media account of the county.

The notices shall briefly describe the nature of the property in custody and inviting persons to view and establish their right to it.

(D) As used in sections 2981.11 to 2981.13 of the Revised Code:

- (1) "Citizens' reward program" has the same meaning as in section 9.92 of the Revised Code.
- (2) "Law enforcement agency" includes correctional institutions.
- (3) "Township law enforcement agency" means an organized police department of a township, a township police district, a joint police district, or the office of a township constable.