# Authoritative Sources

| RANKING LEGEND | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Primary Source: Excellent / Preferred** | ✔ | These sources are created directly by the entity (a.k.a., service provider). Information from these sources can be used to update structures for entry into the database. |
| | **Secondary Source: Conditional / Acceptable** | ❗ | These sources are typically created by: a) service recipients, or parties receiving services from the structure/entity; or b) regulators governing the entity's operations. There is a slight risk to these because secondary sources are not updated as frequently/quickly as primary sources, and may not reflect recent name changes, relocations, etc.  Information from these sources can be used to update structures if all others have been exhausted. **\*\*Before using these, make note of how often the information is updated.\*\*** |
| | **Aggregate / Third Party Source: NOT AUTHORITATIVE** | ✖ | Authors of these sources are neither service providers nor service recipients. They are third-party entities that consume and distribute information about service providers.  Users are discouraged from using these since we cannot verify the source or accuracy of this information. |

**The list below provides examples of authoritative sources for each structure type and their corresponding rank/preference as a source.**

*DISCLAIMER: DOI and the bureaus do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked Web site, nor can they authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked Web sites.*

| Structure Type | Sources | Ranking | Search Tips |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Education:** | | | |
| For all schools, including:<br>- **General Schools**<br>- **Elementary Schools**<br>- **Middle Schools**<br>- **High Schools**<br>- **Colleges/Universities**<br>- **Technical/Trade Schools** | **School District Websites** | ✔ | Example: http://www.plymouth.k12.in.us/ |
| | **Individual School Websites** | ✔ | Example: http://www.plymouth.k12.in.us/webster |
| | **Facebook Pages** | ✔ | Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official.<br>(see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official Facebook pages) |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community. When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this school on the way to work each day.") |
| | **Government Websites (\*.gov or \*.us)** | ❗ | Example: State Department of Education databases, city websites, etc. |
| | **Local News Articles** | ❗ | Use only when comfirming a school has closed; i.e., web searches for the school name and the word "closed" often produce news articles announcing the closing |
| | **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)** | ❗ | https://nces.ed.gov/datatools/ |
| | **National Association for Independent Schools** | ❗ | https://www.nais.org/ |
| | **National Parochial Schools Association** | ❗ | http://www.parochial.com/ |
| | **Commercial or Third-Party Websites** | ✖ | Example: www.greatschools.org<br>Example: www.schooldigger.com |
| **Public Services:** | | | |
| - **Fire Station / EMS Station** | **Fire District Websites** | ✔ | Frequently founder under "Stations" or "Apparatus"<br>Example: https://www.scgov.net/government/emergency-services/fire-department |
| | **Facebook Pages** | ✔ | Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official.<br>(see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official Facebook pages) |
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| | **Government Websites (\*.gov or \*.us)** | ❗ | Example: state firemarshal; county, city, or township websites<br>(If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source) |
| | **U.S. Fire Administration** | ❗ | https://www.usfa.fema.gov/ |
| | **Commercial or Third-Party Websites** | ✖ | Example: http://fire-departments.org/<br>Example: www.firedepartment.net |

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| **- Post Office** | **U.S. Postal Service** | ✔ | http://www.usps.gov/ |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | **USPS's Postmaster Finder** | ❗ | A helpful tool for locating older Post Offices: https://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postmasterfinder/welcome.htm |
| | **Commercial or Third-Party Websites** | ✘ | Example: www.local.com  Example:www.manta.com |
| **- Law Enforcement** | **Individual Department Websites** | ✔ | Example: http://mtsterlingil.com/police-department/ |
| | **Facebook Pages** | ✔ | Before using information from a FaceBook page, make sure the page is official. (see page 6 of our July 2017 newsletter for more on official Facebook pages) |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | **Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)** | ❗ | Example: State Department of Public Safety; county, city, or township websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source) |
| | **Professional Associations** | ❗ | Example: Louisiana Sheriff's Association (http://www.lsa.org/public/sheriffdirectory.aspx) |
| | **Commercial Websites** | ✘ | Example: http://www.usacops.com/ |
| **- Prison / Correctional Facility** | **Individual Facility Websites** | ✔ | Most prisons are government operated and have a government website.  Some can be privately owned/operated and usually under governmental oversight (contract, etc.). Example: http://www.cca.com/locations |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | **Federal Bureau of Prisons** | ✔ | http://www.bop.gov/ |
| | **Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)** | ❗ | Example: State Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, city websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source) |
| | **Commercial Websites** | ✘ | Example: www.yelp.com  Example: www.manta.com |

## Health Services:

| Structure Type | Sources | Ranking | Search Tips |
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| **- Hospital / Medical Center** | **Individual Facility Websites** | ✔ | Example: http://medicalcityhospital.com/ |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | **US Department of Veterans Affairs** | ✔ | https://www.va.gov/find-locations/ |
| | **State or County health departments** | ❗ | Example: http://www.dshs.texas.gov/facilities/find-a-licensee.aspx?terms=emergency%20directory |
| | **Commercial Websites** | ✘ | Example: www.healthgrades.com |
| **- Ambulance Services** | **Individual Facility Websites** | ✔ | The website should list the community as its client. Example: https://mytexasems.org/about/ |
| | **First-hand / Personal Knowledge** | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | **Government Websites (*.gov or *.us)** | ❗ | County, city, township websites, fire department websites, etc. (If no individual webiste can be found for the entity, a government website is then promoted from secondary to a primary source) |
| | **State or County health departments** | ❗ | Example: http://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/ambulance/ground/con-provider-list.pdf |
| | **Professional Associations** | ❗ | Example: National Association of State EMS Officials https://nasemso.org/ |
| | **Commercial Websites** | ✘ | Example: www.yelp.com  Example: www.manta.com  Example: www.merchantcircle.com |

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| - Cemetery | Individual Graveyard Websites | ✔ | Example: http://www.springgrove.org/ |
| | Church Websites | ✔ | Many cemeteries are located on church properties.  Church websites often include address information and may have photos of the adjacent cemetery. |
| | First-hand / Personal Knowledge | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I drive by this point on the way to work each day"). |
| | Find A Grave | ✔ | These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of  interments/burials recorded.<br>www.findagrave.com |
| | Billion Graves | ❗ | These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of  interments/burials recorded.<br>https://billiongraves.com |
| | USGenWeb | ❗ | These are authoritative if the entry has photos and the number of  interments/burials recorded.<br>www.usgenweb.org |
| | topoView | ❗ | A helpful resource for confirming locations of old cemeteries mapped on older and historic USGS Topographic Maps.  May not show all cemeteries or names of cemeteries.<br>https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/ |
| | Genealogy sites | ❗ | To confirm a cemetery's official name, identify which county the cemetery is located in, perform a Google search for the county name and the word "genealogy", and see if local genealogy groups list the cemetery. |
| | Gazetteer websites | ✖ | Example: http://roadsidethoughts.com/ |
| **Government:** | | | |
| - City / Town Hall | Official Website for the City or Township (*.gov or *.us) | ✔ | Internet searches for the name of the city / township usually produce an official website with the locations of government operations.  Use of the term "City Hall" or "Municipal Building" can help refine search results for bigger municipalities (e.g., "Chicago" and "City Hall"). |
| | First-hand / Personal Knowledge | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I work next door to the city's municipal building"). |
| | Wikipedia | ❗ | Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active.<br>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Cities_in_Alabama |
| | Commercial Websites | ✖ | Example: www.niche.com |

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| **Recreation:** | | | |
| **- Campground** | Government Websites (*.gov or *.us) | ✔ | Internet searches for the term "campground" and a town, county, or state name (e.g., "Jefferson County" in Colorado and "campground") usually produce public websites with municipal, county, or state campground locations. |
| | First-hand / Personal Knowledge | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I camp at this state park with my family every summer"). |
| | State, County, Municipal Tourism Departments (*.com) | ✔ | State, county, or municipal tourism websites are usually different from official state government sites, but are still considered authoritative. https://travelnevada.com/camping/camping-in-nevada/ |
| | Individual or Private Campground Websites | ✔ | Many privately owned campgrounds and RV parks have their own websites, which can be referenced as primary sources. https://staypok.com/campground https://koa.com/ |
| | Wikipedia | ❗ | Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Campgrounds_in_New_York_(state) |
| | Commercial Websites | ✘ | Example: www.yelp.com Example: www.manta.com |
| **- Trailhead** | Government Websites (*.gov or *.us) | ✔ | Internet searches for the term "trailheads" and a town, county, or state name (e.g., "Jefferson County" in Colorado and "trailheads") usually produce public websites with municipal, county, or state trails locations. |
| | First-hand / Personal Knowledge | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I hike this trail every Monday after work"). |
| | State, County, Municipal Tourism Departments (*.com) | ✔ | State, county, or municipal tourism websites are usually different from official government sites, but are still considered authoritative. https://www.newmexico.org/things-to-do/outdoor-adventures/camping-hiking/hidden-or-forgotten-state-parks/ |
| | Wikipedia | ❗ | Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Hiking_trails_in_North_Carolina |
| | Trails Apps and other Commercial Sites | ✘ | Trails apps such as Strava, All Trails, Gaia GPS, and onX utilize Open Street Map data which is distributed under the Open Database License (ODbL) and cannot be used by TNMCorps without proper attribution. Other examples of sites to avoid include www.yelp.com and www.manta.com. |
| **- Visitor / Information Center** | Government Websites (*.gov or *.us) | ✔ | Internet searches for the term "visitor center" or "information center" and a town, county, or state name (e.g., "Idaho Springs" in Colorado and "visitor center") usually produce public websites with visitor center information. |
| | First-hand / Personal Knowledge | ✔ | Some editors have physically seen or visited the structure as it exists in their community.  When using this type of knowledge, please document the source in the Comments field (e.g., "I volunteer at this visitor center on weekends"). |
| | State, County, Municipal Tourism Departments (*.com) | ✔ | State or county tourism websites are usually different from official government sites, but are still considered authoritative. https://visitclearcreek.com/clear-creek-county-visitor-centers/ |
| | Wikipedia | ❗ | Lists on Wikipedia are a good starting point, as long as users verify that the structures listed are active. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welcome_centers_in_the_United_States |
| | Commercial Websites | ✘ | Example: www.yelp.com Example: www.manta.com |