



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 18, 2017

Mr. W. Montgomery Meitler
Senior Counsel
Office of Legal Services
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494

OR2017-28623

Dear Mr. Meitler:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 695463 (ORR# 31558).

The Texas Education Agency (the "TEA") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. The TEA states it has redacted student-identifying information from the submitted documents pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code.¹ The TEA claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.116 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the TEA claims and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

¹The United States Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office (the "DOE") has informed this office FERPA does not permit state and local educational authorities to disclose to this office, without parental or student consent, unredacted, personally identifiable information contained in education records for the purpose of our review in the open records ruling process under the Act. The DOE has determined FERPA determinations must be made by the educational authority in possession of the education records. A copy of this letter may be found on the Office of the Attorney General's website: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/og/20060725usdoe.pdf>.

²We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Section 552.116 of the Government Code provides the following:

(a) An audit working paper of an audit of the state auditor or the auditor of a state agency, an institution of higher education as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code, a county, a municipality, a school district, a hospital district, or a joint board operating under Section 22.074, Transportation Code, including any audit relating to the criminal history background check of a public school employee, is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021. If information in an audit working paper is also maintained in another record, that other record is not excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 by this section.

(b) In this section:

(1) "Audit" means an audit authorized or required by a statute of this state or the United States, the charter or an ordinance of a municipality, an order of the commissioners court of a county, the bylaws adopted by or other action of the governing board of a hospital district, a resolution or other action of a board of trustees of a school district, including an audit by the district relating to the criminal history background check of a public school employee, or a resolution or other action of a joint board described by Subsection (a) and includes an investigation.

(2) "Audit working paper" includes all information, documentary or otherwise, prepared or maintained in conducting an audit or preparing an audit report, including:

(A) intra-agency and interagency communications; and


(B) drafts of the audit report or portions of those drafts.

Gov't Code § 552.116. The TEA states the submitted information consists of audit working papers prepared or maintained by its Student Assessment Division Security Task Force in conducting investigations of testing irregularities in the administration of statewide assessment instruments. The TEA informs us the audit is authorized by section 39.057(a)(8) of the Education Code. *See* Educ. Code § 39.057 (listing circumstances in which the commissioner shall authorize investigations). Upon review, we agree section 552.116 is applicable to the information at issue. Therefore, the TEA may withhold the submitted information under section 552.116 of the Government Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Morris Sloan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "M".

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 695463

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)