



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 5, 2019

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

OR2019-06094

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# 760192 (TEA PIR No. 36681).

The Texas Education Agency (the "agency") received a request for information pertaining to certain complaints filed during a specified time period. You state the agency has redacted information pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code.¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.116 of the Government Code. We have

¹Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination authorizing all governmental bodies to withhold certain categories of information, including e-mail addresses subject to section 552.137 of the Government Code, without the necessity of requesting an attorney general decision. *See* ORD 648. The United States Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office (the "DOE") has informed this office that FERPA does not permit state and local educational authorities to disclose to this office, without parental 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 that FERPA determinations must be made by the educational authority in possession of the education records. We have posted a copy of the letter from the DOE to this office on the Attorney General's website: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/og/20060725usdoe.pdf>.

considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

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. You state some of the submitted information consists of audit working papers prepared or maintained by the agency's Division of Special Populations in

²We assume that 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 that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

conjunction with investigations in response to complaints under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400-1482. You further state the audits are authorized by sections 300.151 through 300.153 of title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which require the agency to conduct audits of school districts as part of the state complaint procedures under IDEA.

Based on these representations and our review, we agree the submitted information consists of audit working papers for purposes of section 552.116. Therefore, the agency 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,



Jesse Harvey
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JH/jxd

Ref: ID# 760192

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)