



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 4, 2019

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

OR2019-24625

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# 785662 (ORR# 38839).

The Texas Education Agency (the "TEA") received a request for information related to a specified investigation. The TEA states it is withholding student-identifying information pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code.¹ The TEA states it is releasing some of the requested information. The TEA claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the TEA claims and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

¹ The 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

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses section 21.062 of the Education Code, which provides, in part, the following:

(a) During an investigation by the [C]ommissioner [of Education (the “commissioner”)] for an alleged incident of misconduct, the commissioner may issue a subpoena to compel:

...

(2) the production, for inspection or copying, of relevant evidence that is located in this state.

...

(d) All information and materials subpoenaed or compiled in connection with an investigation described by Subsection (a) are confidential and not subject to disclosure under [the Act].

Educ. Code § 21.062(a)(2), (d). The TEA informs us the submitted information relates to an investigation of an educator by the commissioner for an alleged incident of misconduct. The TEA further states the information at issue was submitted to the TEA in response to a subpoena issued by the commissioner. Based on these representations, we agree the TEA must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 21.062(d) of the Education Code.

The TEA also asks this office to issue a previous determination that would permit it to withhold information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 21.062(d) of the Education Code without requesting a ruling from this office. Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001). We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Accordingly, 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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable

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.

charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Morris Sloan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/be

Ref: ID# 785662

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)