

[This draft is based almost exclusively on the CSBA Sample Policy]

BP 1340

Access To District Records

The Governing Board recognizes the right of citizens to have access to public records of the district. The Board intends the district to provide any person reasonable access to the public records of the schools and district during normal business hours and within the requirements of law. Public access shall not be given to records listed as exempt from public disclosure in the California Public Records Act and other state or federal law.

In response to a public records request, the Superintendent or designee shall make reasonable efforts to locate the requested records, including, but not limited to, any electronic communication substantively related to the records, such as email, text messages, instant messages, and other electronic communications, regardless of whether they are transmitted through a district-provided device or account or through an employee's or Board member's personal device or account.

The district may charge for copies of public records or other materials requested by individuals or groups. The charge shall be based on actual costs of duplication, as determined by the Superintendent or designee and as specified in administrative regulation.

In order to help maintain the security of district records, members of the public granted access shall examine records in the presence of a district staff member.

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Comment [1]: ***Note: In City of San Jose v. Superior Court, the California Supreme Court held that communications regarding public business transmitted to or by public officials on a personal account or device are not categorically exempt from disclosure under the CPRA (Government Code 6250-6270). The court noted that public agencies are required to disclose all applicable records that can be located "with reasonable effort," including those records contained on a public official's or employee's personal device regardless of whether they were transmitted through district servers. Such searches need not be extraordinary or intrusive. For further information, see CSBA's Legal Alert: Tips for Governing Boards in Response to Public Records Act Ruling on Electronic Communications. Also see AR 3580 - District Records and BB 9012 - Board Member Electronic Communications. ***

***Note: Government Code 6253 authorizes the district to charge a person requesting a copy of a record a fee covering the direct costs of duplication; however, no fee can be charged to a person who wishes to inspect but not copy a record. In North County Parents Organization for Children with Special Needs v. Department of Education, the court determined that direct costs include only the cost of running the copy machine and possibly the expense of the person operating it. Direct costs do not include the other costs that may be associated with the request, such as searching, reviewing, or redacting the record; assisting the requester in formulating the request; responding to the request; or employee time to sit with the requester during inspection of the record. Because it is not clearly authorized by law, districts wishing to charge for the cost of the copy machine operator should consult with legal counsel. ***

***Note: In addition, Government Code 6253 authorizes districts to provide faster access or access to more records than the minimum standards provided by law. According to the court in North County Parents Organization, this provision permits a district to waive or reduce its fees. For example, a district may consider waiving fees below a certain dollar threshold because the costs of collecting the fee exceed the fee amount. ***

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AR 1340

Access To District Records

Definitions

Public records include any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the district's business prepared, owned, used, or retained by the district regardless of physical form or characteristics. (Government Code 6252)

Writing means any handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, photocopying, transmitting by electronic mail or facsimile, and every other means of recording upon any tangible thing any form of communication or representation, including letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols or combinations thereof, and any record thereby created, regardless of the manner in which the record has been stored. (Government Code 6252)

Member of the public means any person, except a member, agent, officer, or employee of the district or a federal, state, or other local agency acting within the scope of his/her membership, agency, office, or employment. (Government Code 6252)

Public Records

Public records to which members of the public shall have access include, but are not limited to:

1. Proposed and approved district budgets and annual audits (Education Code 41020, 42103)
2. Statistical compilations
3. Reports and memoranda
4. Notices and bulletins
5. Minutes of public meetings (Education Code 35145)
6. Meeting agendas (Government Code 54957.5)
7. Official communications between the district and other government agencies
8. School-based program plans (Education Code 52850)
9. Information and data relevant to the evaluation and modification of district plans
10. Initial proposals of exclusive employee representatives and of the district (Government Code 3547)
11. Records pertaining to claims and litigation against the district which have been adjudicated or settled (Government Code 6254, 6254.25)
12. Statements of economic interests required by the Conflict of Interest Code (Government Code 81008)
13. Documents containing names, salaries, and pension benefits of district employees
14. Employment contracts and settlement agreements (Government Code 53262)
15. Instructional materials including, but not limited to, textbooks (Education Code 49091.10)

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Comment [2]: ***Note: Although Government Code 6254 exempts from disclosure those records pertaining to pending litigation, the Attorney General opined in 71 Ops.Cal.Atty.Gen. 235 (1988) that records predating the filing of the lawsuit are subject to disclosure. In Fairley v. Superior Court, a California Court of Appeal concurred and held that documents were exempted only if they were prepared for use in litigation. (See item #2 in the section "Confidential Records" below.) The following item reflects the opinion of the court and the Attorney General. The Governing Board should consult legal counsel if it believes that any document related to litigation should not be disclosed.***

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Comment [3]: ***Note: Generally, the names and salaries of public employees are subject to disclosure under the Public Records Act. However, in International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers v. The Superior Court of Alameda County, the California Supreme Court recognized that, in some instances, the salaries of certain employees might be exempt from disclosure, depending on the facts and circumstances. Additionally, in Sacramento County Employees Retirement System v. Superior Court, a California Court of Appeal held that the names and corresponding pension benefits of members of a county retirement system are subject to disclosure and are not considered "individual records of members" protected by Government Code 31532.***

Access to public records of the district shall be granted to Governing Board members on the same basis as any other member of the public. When Board members are authorized to access public records in the administration of their duties, the Superintendent or designee shall not discriminate among any of the Board members as to which record, or portion of the record, will be made available, or when it will be made available. (Government Code 6252.5, 6252.7)

When disclosing to a member of the public any record that contains personal information, including, but not limited to, an employee's home address, home telephone number, social security number, personal cell phone number, or birth date, the Superintendent or designee shall ensure that such personal information is redacted from that record. (Government Code 6254.29, 6254.3)

Confidential Public Records

Records to which the members of the public shall not have access include, but are not limited to:

1. Preliminary drafts, notes, interagency or intradistrict memoranda that are not retained by the district in the ordinary course of business, provided that the public interest in withholding these records clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure (Government Code 6254)
2. Records specifically generated in connection with or prepared for use in litigation to which the district is a party or to respond to claims made against the district pursuant to the Tort Claims Act, until the litigation or claim has been finally adjudicated or otherwise settled, or beyond, if the records are protected by some other provision of law (Government Code 6254, 6254.25)
3. Personnel records, medical records, or similar materials, the disclosure of which would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy (Government Code 6254). The home addresses, home telephone numbers, personal cell phone numbers, or birth date of employees may only be disclosed as follows: (Government Code 6254.3)
 - a. To an agent or a family member of the employee
 - b. To an officer or employee of a state agency or another school district or county office of education when necessary for the performance of official duties
 - c. To an employee organization pursuant to regulations and decisions of the Public Employment Relations Board, except that the home address and any telephone number for an employee who performs law enforcement-related functions, or the birth date of any employee, shall not be disclosed. Upon written request of any employee, the district shall not disclose the employee's home address, home telephone number, personal cell phone number, or birth date, and the district shall remove this information from any mailing list of the district except a list used exclusively to contact the employee.
 - d. To an agent or employee of a health benefit plan providing health services or administering claims for health services to district employees and their enrolled dependents, for the purpose of providing the health services or administering claims for employees and their enrolled dependents
4. Student records, except directory information and other records to the extent permitted under the law, when disclosure is authorized by law

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Comment [4]: ***Note: Government Code 6254.29 specifies that the CPRA does not require a district to disclose an employee's social security number and states the Legislature's intent that districts redact social security numbers from any records being disclosed to the public. In addition, Government Code 6254.3, as amended by AB 2843 (Ch. 830, Statutes of 2016), prohibits disclosure of an employee's personal cell phone number and birth date.***

5. Test questions, scoring keys, and other examination data except as provided by law (Government Code 6254)
6. Without affecting the law of eminent domain, the contents of real estate appraisals or engineering or feasibility estimates and evaluations made for or by the district relative to the acquisition of property, or to prospective public supply and construction contracts, until all of the property has been acquired or all of the contract agreement obtained (Government Code 6254)
7. Information required from any taxpayer in connection with the collection of local taxes that is received in confidence and the disclosure of the information to other persons would result in unfair competitive disadvantage to the person supplying the information (Government Code 6254)
8. Library circulation and patron use records of a borrower or patron including, but not limited to, his/her name, address, telephone number, email address, borrowing information, or use of library information resources, except when disclosure is to a person acting within the scope of his/her duties in the administration of the library, to a person authorized in writing by the individual to whom the records pertain, or by court order (Government Code 6254, 6267)
9. Records for which the disclosure is exempted or prohibited pursuant to state or federal law, including, but not limited to, provisions of the Evidence Code relating to privilege (Government Code 6254)
10. Documents prepared by or for the district to assess its vulnerability to terrorist attack or other criminal acts intended to disrupt district operations and that are for distribution or consideration in closed session (Government Code 6254)
11. Recall petitions, petitions for special elections to fill Board vacancies, or petitions for the reorganization of the school district (Government Code 6253.5)
12. Minutes of Board meetings held in closed session (Government Code 54957.2)
13. Computer software developed by the district (Government Code 6254.9)
14. Information security records, the disclosure of which would reveal vulnerabilities to, or otherwise increase potential for an attack on, the district's information technology system (Government Code 6254.19)
15. Records that contain individually identifiable health information, including records that may be exempt pursuant to physician-patient privilege, the Confidentiality of Medical Information Act, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (Government Code 6254, 6255)
16. Any other records listed as exempt from public disclosure in the California Public Records Act or other statutes
17. Any other records for which the district can demonstrate that, based on the particular facts of the case, the public interest served by not disclosing the record clearly outweighs the public interest served by disclosure of the record (Government Code 6255)

Inspection of Records and Requests for Copies

Any person may request a copy or inspection of any district record that is open to the public and not exempt from disclosure. (Government Code 6253)

Within 10 days of receiving any request to inspect or copy a district record, the Superintendent

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Comment [5]: ***Note: The following exemption protects attorney-client privileged communications and attorney work product, as well as other work product prepared for use in pending litigation or claims. Pursuant to the Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of California, when an attorney has been hired to represent the district as a whole, this privilege may only be waived by the Board.***

Note: In Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors v. Superior Court, the California Supreme Court held that invoices for the services of district counsel, or portions of those invoices, may be privileged and therefore exempt from disclosure. The Board should consult with legal counsel to determine what records to disclose in response to a CPRA request for such invoices.

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Comment [6]: ***Note: Item #17 below reflects an exemption often referred to as the "catch-all" or "public interest" exemption pursuant to Government Code 6255. This exemption allows a district to withhold a record based on analysis of the specific facts of the situation and in light of the competing public interests. This exemption also includes the "deliberative process privilege" which is designed to protect a district's decision-making process in order to encourage candid discussions within the district. Legal counsel should be consulted to determine whether a request for a record falls under this exemption.***

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Comment [7]: ***Note: Court decisions have held that a public record request may be made orally, by phone, or in writing, including by email, fax, or hand delivery. The district may ask, but not require, that the person put an oral request in writing.***

or designee shall determine whether the request seeks release of a disclosable public record in the district's possession. The Superintendent or designee shall promptly inform the person making the request of his/her determination and the reasons for the decision. (Government Code 6253)

In unusual circumstances, the Superintendent or designee may extend the 10-day limit for up to 14 days by providing written notice to the requester and setting forth the reasons for the extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be made. Unusual circumstances include the following, but only to the extent reasonably necessary to properly process the request: (Government Code 6253)

1. The need to search for and collect the requested records from field facilities or other establishments that are separate from the office processing the request
2. The need to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a voluminous amount of separate and distinct records which are demanded in a single request
3. The need for consultation, which shall be conducted with all practicable speed, with another agency (e.g., a state agency or city) having a substantial interest in the determination of the request or among two or more components of the district (e.g., two different school sites) with substantial interest in the request
4. In the case of electronic records, the need to compile data, write programming language or a computer program, or construct a computer report to extract data

If the Superintendent or designee determines that the request seeks disclosable public records, the determination shall state the estimated date and time when the records will be made available. (Government Code 6253)

Public records shall be open to inspection at all times during district office hours. Any reasonably segregable portion of a record shall be made available for inspection by any person requesting the record after deletion of the portions that are exempted by law. (Government Code 6253)

Upon request for a copy that reasonably describes an identifiable record, an exact copy shall be promptly provided unless it is impracticable to do so. (Government Code 6253)

The Superintendent or designee shall charge an amount for copies that reflects the direct costs of duplication. Written requests to waive the fee shall be submitted to the Superintendent or designee.

In addition to maintaining public records for public inspection during district office hours, the district may comply with public records requests by posting any public record on the district's web site and, in response to a public records request, directing the member of the public to the location on the web site where the record can be found. However, if the member of the public is unable to access or reproduce the record from the web site, the district shall promptly provide an exact copy of the public record upon payment of duplication fees, if applicable, unless it is impracticable to provide an exact copy. (Government Code 6253)

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Comment [8]: ***Note: Government Code 6253 states that copies of records must be provided "promptly." The term "promptly" is not defined in law, but Government Code 6253 also states that a district may not delay or obstruct the copying of records. Thus, if the records are held in a manner that allows for prompt disclosure, the records generally should not be withheld because of the 10-day response period or the 14-day extension detailed above.***

If any person requests that a public record be provided in an electronic format, the district shall make that record available in any electronic format in which it holds the information. The district shall provide a copy of the electronic record in the format requested as long as the requested format is one that has been used by the district to create copies for its own use or for use by other agencies. (Government Code 6253.9)

The cost of duplicating an electronic record shall be limited to the direct cost of producing a copy of the record in electronic format. However, the requester shall bear the cost of producing the copy of the electronic record, including the cost to construct the record and the cost of programming and computer services necessary to produce the copy, under the following circumstances: (Government Code 6253.9)

1. The electronic record is one that is produced only at otherwise regularly scheduled intervals.
2. The request would require data compilation, extraction, or programming to produce the record.

Assistance in Identifying Requested Records

If the Superintendent or designee denies a request for disclosable records, he/she shall assist the requester in making a focused and effective request that reasonably describes an identifiable record. To the extent reasonable under the circumstances, the Superintendent or designee shall do all of the following: (Government Code 6253.1)

1. Assist in identifying records and information responsive to the request or the purpose of the request, if specified. If, after making a reasonable effort to elicit additional clarifying information from the requester to help identify the record, the Superintendent or designee is still unable to identify the information, this requirement shall be deemed satisfied.
2. Describe the information technology and physical location in which the records exist
3. Provide suggestions for overcoming any practical basis for denying access to the records or information sought

Provisions of the Public Records Act shall not be construed so as to delay or obstruct the inspection or copying of public records. Any notification denying a request for public records shall state the name and title of each person responsible for the denial. (Government Code 6253)