

PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM
HANDLING OF PUBLIC INFORMATION ACT REQUEST ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

GBA

EMS ISD receives Public Information Act/Open Records/Freedom of Information requests on a consistent basis throughout the year. Examples of requests include, but are not limited to, lists of directory information for students or employees, personnel documents including hiring and salary information, emails/communications/records pertaining to a specific event or situation, and district documents. It is essential that employees follow this procedure in the event they are the recipients of such a request, as there are legal penalties for mishandling of an official request. It is the responsibility of the Communications Department to facilitate all requests received. This includes requests from media, parents*, PTAs/PTSAs, booster clubs, student organizations or other groups.

PROCEDURES

1. If you personally or your campus/department receives a Public Information Act/Open Records request, it should be turned over immediately (same day) to the district's Communications Department. Since time is of essence in the proper handling of such requests, please call 817-232-0880 or email info@ems-isd.net to inform the department of the request. If it is a hard copy, please also fax a copy to 817-847-6124, or scan/forward a copy via email. The original still should be forwarded to the Communications Department.
2. It is the responsibility of the EMS ISD Communications Department, acting as the Superintendent's designee for official requests, to contact the requestor and acknowledge receipt of the request. Even if the request is addressed to a staff member personally, it is not his/her responsibility to fulfill the request. If the employee has contact with the requestor, it is appropriate to acknowledge the process and that it has been forwarded for appropriate handling in accordance with legal procedures.
3. Once the request has been turned over to Communications, individuals should not begin gathering information or take any action until notified to do so. If the request requires staff time to fulfill, an administrator may be asked to provide an estimate of time. In accordance with law, staff time may be charged at the rate of \$15 an hour, or \$28.50 for technology personnel. The requestor must first agree to accept and pay any staff charges in accordance with the estimate provided prior to district personnel devoting staff time to gather the information.
4. If the Communications Department staff requests documents from district personnel, they should be provided in a timely manner. Copies of the documents being provided can be kept with the campus/department, but the information being provided should not be altered in any way. Communications staff will review the documents and redact any confidential information as required by law before the information is released for the request.
5. Depending on the nature of the request, legal counsel also may be brought in to review documents and ensure proper fulfillment and handling of the request. It is possible that the district's attorneys may contact

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employees for a discussion of the information that has been turned over.
6. Please note that the “10 days” that is referenced refers to the amount of business days (ie, open for business) that a district has to acknowledge receipt of the request and seek an Attorney General opinion if necessary. It does not necessarily relate to when a requestor can expect the information. By law, a district has a “reasonable amount of time” to fulfill the request. However, it is our practice in EMS ISD to provide requested information in a timely manner.

PARENT
REQUEST

Parents are entitled to view/receive copies of any documents related to their child. Simple requests for copies of progress reports, report cards, test scores, documents in cumulative folders, etc., are not considered Public Information Act requests and do not need to be routed through the Communications Department. However, parent requests are handled as official Public Information Act requests when they involve documents that contain information about students other than their child, require documents from multiple locations (such as requests from parents of students at different schools), or are overly broad in nature. Communications staff is always available to discuss the proper handling of a request