

General Personnel

Personnel Records¹

Maintenance and Access to Records

The Superintendent or designee shall manage the maintenance of personnel records in accordance with State and federal law and School Board policy. Records, as determined by the Superintendent, are retained for all employment applicants, employees, and former employees given the need for the District to document employment-related decisions, evaluate program and staff effectiveness, and comply with government recordkeeping and reporting requirements. Personnel records shall be maintained in the District's administrative office, under the Superintendent's direct supervision.

Access to personnel records is available as follows:

1. An employee will be given access to his or her personnel records according to State law and guidelines developed by the Superintendent.²
2. An employee's supervisor or other management employee who has an employment or business-related reason to inspect the record is authorized to have access.
3. Anyone having the respective employee's written consent may have access.
4. Access will be granted to anyone authorized by State or federal law to have access.
5. All other requests for access to personnel information are governed by Board policy 2:250, *Access to District Public Records*.³

¹ State or federal law controls this policy's content. This policy contains an item on which collective bargaining may be required. Any policy that impacts upon wages, hours, and terms and conditions of employment, is subject to collective bargaining upon request by the employee representative, even if the policy involves an inherent managerial right.

This policy is consistent with the minimum requirements of State law. The local collective bargaining agreement may contain provisions that exceed these requirements. When a policy's subject matter is superseded by a bargaining agreement, the board policy can state, "Please refer to the applicable collective bargaining agreement(s)."

² Upon written request by an employee to inspect, copy, or receive copies of his or her personnel file contents, with a few exceptions, the employer must grant such a request at least two times per calendar year. Ill. Personnel Record Review Act (PRRA), 820 ILCS 40/2, amended by P.A.s 103-201 and 103-727, eff. 1-1-25. See sample exhibit 5:150-E, *Employee Request Form for Personnel Records*. Thus, personnel files should contain only factual and accurate job-related information. Additionally, 105 ILCS 5/22-94(c), a/k/a *Faith's Law*, added by P.A. 102-702, requires a district to maintain as part of an employee's personnel file a form including sexual misconduct related information; the form is completed at the time of separation of employment or at the request of the employee. See sample administrative procedure 5:150-AP, *Personnel Records*. Finally, the PRRA identifies records that may not be kept: a record of an employee's associations, political activities, publications, communications, or non-employment activities (820 ILCS 40/9, subject to limited exceptions) and records identifying an employee as the subject of an investigation by the Ill. Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) if the investigation resulted in an unfounded report as specified in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (820 ILCS 40/13). See f/n 5.

³ Unless a specific exemption is available, personnel file information is available to anyone making a FOIA request. 5 ILCS 140/. Specific exemptions protect the following:

1. *Private information* meaning "unique identifiers, including a person's social security number, driver's license number, employee identification number, biometric identifiers, personal financial information, passwords or other access codes, medical records, home or personal telephone numbers, and personal email addresses. Private information also includes home address and personal license plates, except as otherwise provided by law or when compiled without possibility of attribution to any person." 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(b); 5 ILCS 140/2(c-5).
2. *Personal information* "the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." 5 ILCS 140/7(1)(c).

Prospective Employer Inquiries Concerning a Current or Former Employee's Job Performance

The Superintendent or designee shall manage a process for responding to inquiries by a prospective employer concerning a current or former employee's job performance.⁴ The Superintendent shall: ⁵

1. Execute the requirements in the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act whenever another school district asks for a reference concerning an applicant who is or was a District employee and was the subject of a report made by a District employee to Ill. Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS); and

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3. *Information prohibited from being disclosed under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA).* 5 ILCS 140/7.5(yy); 115 ILCS 5/3(d). The prohibitions in the IELRA overlap with some categories of private information identified in FOIA and include: (a) the employee's home address (including ZIP code and county); (b) the employee's date of birth; (c) the employee's home and personal phone number; (d) the employee's personal email address; (e) any information personally identifying employee membership or membership status in a labor organization or other voluntary association affiliated with a labor organization or a labor federation; and (f) e-mails or other communications between a labor organization and its members. Unless a specific exception in the IELRA applies, if a district receives a third-party request for any of these six categories of information about an employee, the district must provide the union with a copy of the written request (or written summary of an oral request), as well as a copy of the district's response within five business days of sending the response. If the employee is not in a bargaining unit, then these notices must be given directly to the employee. 115 ILCS 5/3(d). **Note:** It is best practice to maintain union-related documents, such as grievances, separately from an employee's personnel file.
 4. *Information prohibited from being disclosed by the PRRA.* 5 ILCS 140/7.5(q). The PRRA prohibits the disclosure of a performance evaluation under FOIA. 820 ILCS 40/11. The treatment of a request for a disciplinary report, letter of reprimand, or other disciplinary action depends on the age and nature of the responsive record. If the responsive record is more than four years old and is not related to an incident or attempted incident of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, or sexual misconduct as defined in 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(c), the request must be denied unless the disclosure is permitted by the Act. 5 ILCS 140/7.5(q); 820 ILCS 40/8, amended by P.A. 102-702. If the responsive record is more than four years old and is related to an incident or an attempted incident of sexual abuse, severe physical abuse, or sexual misconduct as defined in 105 ILCS 5/22-85.5(c), the request cannot be denied. 820 ILCS 40/8, amended by P.A. 102-702. If the responsive record is four years old or less (regardless of its nature), the district should provide the record and must notify the employee in written form or through email, if available. 820 ILCS 40/7 and 40/8, amended by P.A. 102-702.

The School Code prohibits the disclosure of school teacher, principal, and superintendent performance evaluations except as otherwise provided in the certified employee evaluation laws. 105 ILCS 5/24A-7.1. Finally, sexual misconduct *employment history review (EHR) information* received pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/22-94, added by P.A. 102-702, is not deemed a public record under the School Code. However, P.A. 102-702 did not specifically amend or reference FOIA. Districts should consult their board attorneys if they receive FOIA requests for EHR information regarding current or former employees.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) (Pub.L. 104-191) created national standards to protect individuals' medical records and other personal health information. If a district is a *covered entity* (i.e., offers a self-insured group health plan or flexible spending account), it must establish clear procedures to protect the employee's health information. 45 C.F.R. §164.502. Such districts should consult their attorneys and insurance provider for assistance.

⁴ The Employment Record Disclosure Act (745 ILCS 46/10) provides conditional immunity to employers responding to a reference request; it states: "Any employer or authorized employee or agent acting on behalf of an employer who, upon inquiry by a prospective employer, provides truthful written or verbal information, or information that it believes in good faith is truthful, about a current or former employee's job performance is presumed to be acting in good faith and is immune from civil liability for the disclosure and the consequences of the disclosure." This immunity statute does not, however, create an exemption to the requirements in the PRRA. The PRRA requires an employer to give an employee written notice before divulging a "disciplinary report, letter of reprimand, or other disciplinary action to a third party." 820 ILCS 40/7. An employment application may contain a waiver of this notice. *Id.*

⁵ 325 ILCS 5/4(d) requires a superintendent, upon being asked for a reference concerning an employee or former employee, to disclose to the requesting school district the fact that a district employee has made a report involving the conduct of the applicant or caused a report to be made to DCFS. For more information, see sample administrative procedure 5:150-AP, *Personnel Records*.

Required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (20 U.S.C. §7926). On 6-27-2018, the U.S. Dept. of Education issued a *Dear Colleague Letter* stating that school policies must explicitly state this requirement.

Consult the board attorney about what "or has probable cause to believe, has engaged in sexual misconduct" means. For guidance, sample policy 5:90, *Abused and Neglected Child Reporting*, and its f/n 15 analysis define an "alleged incident of sexual abuse" as an incident of sexual abuse of a child, as defined in 720 ILCS 5/11-9.1A, that is alleged to have been perpetrated by school personnel, including a school vendor or volunteer, that occurred: on school grounds during a school activity; or outside of school grounds or not during a school activity.

2. Comply with the federal law prohibiting the District from providing a recommendation of employment for an employee, contractor, or agent that the District knows, or has probable cause to believe, has engaged in sexual misconduct with a student or minor in violation of the law,⁶ but the Superintendent or designee may follow routine procedures regarding the transmission of administrative or personnel files for that employee.
3. Manage the District's responses to employer requests for sexual misconduct related employment history review (EHR) information in accordance with *Faith's Law*.⁷

When requested for information about an employee by an entity other than a prospective employer, the District will only confirm position and employment dates unless the employee has submitted a written request to the Superintendent or designee.

LEGAL REF.: 20 U.S.C. §7926.
105 ILCS 5/22-94.
325 ILCS 5/4, Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.
745 ILCS 46/10, Employment Record Disclosure Act.
820 ILCS 40/, Personnel Record Review Act.
23 Ill.Admin.Code §1.660.

CROSS REF.: 2:250 (Access to District Public Records), 5:90 (Abused and Neglected Child Reporting), 7:340 (Student Records)

APPROVED:

⁶ Consult the board attorney in these situations for help about what the superintendent may or may not say. Questions exist whether the superintendent says nothing, provides a neutral reference, or whether a *recommendation* could mean positive or negative statements.

⁷ 105 ILCS 5/22-94(e), added by P.A. 102-702.