

# **DOLTON RIVERDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 148**

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT POLICY**

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This Policy (“**FOIA Policy**”) outlines the Dolton Riverdale School District No. 148’s (“**School District**”) procedures for compliance with the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, 5 ILCS 140/1 *et seq.* (“**Act**”), by the School District and any person requesting public records from the School District (“**Requestor**”), and contains instructions and forms for the implementation of the FOIA Policy. The School District will respond to written requests for inspection, copying, or certification of public records in accordance with the Act, this FOIA Policy, and other applicable law. All notices and other communications in connection with a request to inspect, copy, or certify public records under the Act must be sent to: School District’s Freedom of Information Officer, 114 W. 144th Street, Riverdale, IL 60827 (“**Office**” or “**School District Administrative Office**”).

### **I. REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC RECORDS**

#### **A. Responsibilities of FOIA Officer**

The School District’s Freedom of Information Officer (“**FOIA Officer**”) is the person administratively responsible for receiving and processing all requests to inspect, copy, or certify public records under the Act and this FOIA Policy. The FOIA Officer is the person with authority on behalf of the School District to grant or deny requests to inspect, copy, or certify public records filed pursuant to the Act and this FOIA Policy, to extend the time for response, and to issue appropriate notices. The School District shall designate one or more officials or employees to act as its FOIA officer. The FOIA Officer shall not be considered to be a “officer” or “official” of the School District for any purposes other than those specified in the Act. The School District may designate more than one FOIA Officer and, if only one FOIA Officer is designated, shall designate a Designee who will act on the FOIA Officers behalf in the event that the FOIA Officer is unavailable.

#### **B. FOIA Officer Training**

The initial FOIA Officer(s) shall complete the electronic training curriculum developed and administered by the Public Access Counselor within six months after January 1, 2010, and shall successfully complete an annual training program pursuant to Section 3.5(b) of the Freedom of Information Act. Any FOIA Officer who is subsequently appointed shall complete the electronic training curriculum within 30 days after assuming the position.

#### **C. Requests**

All requests to inspect, copy, or certify public records must be in writing, directed to the School District and submitted via personal delivery, mail, fax, or other means available to the School District in accordance with Section 3(c) of the Act. The School District prefers that a Requestor use the form attached as **FORM 1** (“**Request Form**”), submitted to the attention of the Freedom of Information Officer at the School District’s primary address at 114 W. 144th Street, Riverdale, IL 60827, but the School District will honor all requests lawfully submitted to the School District even if it is not submitted on the preferred form. Any written request submitted to the School District for a public record shall be deemed to be a FOIA request and treated accordingly.

To facilitate the receipt and processing of Requests, the School District shall establish an email address dedicated to such FOIA requests and said email account shall be monitored daily by one or more FOIA Officers. The School District shall also include information on its web site and all

social media sites directing the public to said email address and, where practical, establish a link on the web site and social media sites to that email account to assist the public in making a request and facilitate the processing thereof.

#### **D. Receipt of Requests**

FOIA requests submitted via personal delivery, mail, fax, or other means available to the School District must be addressed to the School District and will be deemed received only upon actual receipt by the School District on a working day, regardless of date of transmittal. Any request submitted via e-mail to the School District shall only be deemed received and proper when directed to the School District as specified in Paragraph I(C) above. An email sent during business hours will be deemed received on the day it is received by the School District. An email sent after business hours will be deemed received on the following business day.

#### **E. Request Form Processing**

All requests for inspection and copying received by the School District shall immediately be forwarded to its FOIA Officer or designee in accordance with Section 3(c) of the Act. Upon receiving a request for a public record, the FOIA Officer will note the Request with the date and time of receipt by the School District, compute the day on which the Response is due and note the date on which the Response is due on the Request. The FOIA Officer will maintain an electronic or paper copy of the Request, including all documents submitted with the Request, until the Request has been complied with or denied. The FOIA Officer will create a file for the retention of the original request, a copy of the response, a record of written communications with the requester, and a copy of other communications related to the Request.

#### **F. Supplemental Requests**

Supplemental, amended, or additional requests to inspect, copy, or certify public records will not relate back to the time of receipt of the initial request. Supplemental, amended, or additional requests will be considered new requests for purpose of determining all applicable time periods.

#### **G. Interpretations or Advice**

The FOIA Officer(s) shall not interpret or advise Requestor as to the meaning or significance of any public records. The FOIA Officer is encouraged to contact the Requestor, if necessary, to clarify the Request. The FOIA Officer is also encouraged to seek advice on appropriate responses from the School District Attorney. The FOIA Officer(s) may seek advisory opinions from the Public Access Counselor as specified below.

## **II. RESPONSES TO REQUESTS**

#### **A. Time for Response**

The School District will respond to any FOIA Request filed pursuant to Section I of this FOIA

Policy within five working days after the Request is received by the School District, except for those Requests which seek records to be used for a commercial purpose which are governed by Section II.C. All responses and decisions required to be issued by the School District pursuant to the Act or this FOIA Policy will be conclusively deemed to have been given as of the date of personal delivery to the Requestor or to the residence of the Requestor entitled to a response or decision or, if mailed, as of the date of mailing, regardless of the date of actual receipt by the Requestor.

## **B. Responding to Requests**

The FOIA Officer may consult with the School District Attorney before responding to any request to inspect, copy, or certify public records. The FOIA Officer shall consult with the School District Supervisor or the School District Attorney in the event that the FOIA Officer believes it would be beneficial to the School District to seek an advisory opinion from the Public Access Counselor regarding whether a request should be denied in part or in whole.

## **C. Requests for Records to be Used for a Commercial Purpose**

The time lines specified above in Section II.A shall not apply to requests for records to be used for commercial purposes, as defined in Section 2(c-10) of the Act. The School District shall respond to a request for records to be used for a commercial purpose within 21 working days after receipt. In accordance with Section 3.1(a) of the Act, the response shall (i) provide the Requestor an estimate of the time required by the School District to provide the records requested and an estimate of the fees to be charged, which the School District may require the Requestor to pay in full before copying the requested documents, (ii) deny the request pursuant to a lawful exemption; (iii) notify the Requestor that the request is unduly burdensome and extend an opportunity to the Requestor to attempt to reduce the Request to manageable proportions, or (iv) provide the records requested. Unless the records are exempt from disclosure, the School District shall comply with a request within a reasonable period of time considering the size and complexity of the request, giving priority to records requested for noncommercial purposes. It is a violation of the Act for a person to knowingly obtain public records for a commercial purpose without disclosing it is for a commercial purpose.

## **D. Form of Response**

### **1. Disclosure of Public Records.**

- (a) If the FOIA Officer determines that the Act requires disclosure of all or any part or portion of any public records requested on a Request Form filed under Section I of this FOIA Policy, the FOIA Officer will notify the Requestor in writing of that determination by use of **FORM 2** or a substantially similar writing ("*Approval Form*").
- (b) Except as otherwise specifically authorized by the FOIA Officer, only School District personnel will be permitted to search School District files, records, or storage areas; to use School District equipment; or to make copies of School District's public records. Original public records may not be removed from the School District's possession at any time.
- (c) Public records requested under the FOIA may be inspected, or copies of public records obtained, during Business Hours at the School District Administrative Office. Because space is limited, Requestors must make arrangements in advance with the FOIA Officer for a specific appointment

to inspect public records at the School District Administrative Office.

- (d) Requests for the reproduction of any public records that are tape recordings will be honored in accordance with the provisions of the Act and this FOIA Policy.
  - (e) The Requestor must pay all copying, certification, and postage fees in advance of receiving copies of any public records.
  - (f) When requested in electronic format, records will be furnished in the electronic format specified by the Requestor, if feasible, in accordance with Section 6(a) of the Act. If it is not feasible to furnish the records in the specified electronic format, then the School District will furnish the record in the format in which it is maintained by the School District, or in paper format at the option of the Requestor.
  - (g) In the alternative, where the records responsive to the request total more than 5 pages and copies have been requested by the Requester, the School District may produce the copies in electronic form in .pdf format unless the Requester has expressly requested paper copies. No charge shall be made for the cost of the electronic media, other than the actual charges of the disks, unless the number of pages of the records provided exceeds 50 pages.
2. **Extension of Time.** If the FOIA Officer determines that additional time is needed, and allowed under Section 3(e) of the Act, to respond to a request filed pursuant to Section I of this FOIA Policy, the FOIA Officer will notify the Requestor in writing of that determination, the reasons requiring the extension, and the length of the extension, which will not in any event exceed five working days from the original due date. The FOIA Officer shall provide notice of the extension by use of **FORM 3** or a substantially similar writing in accordance with Sections 3(e) and 3(f) of the Act ("**Notice of Extension**"). The Requestor and the School District may also agree in writing to extend the time for compliance for a period to be determined by the parties, by use of **FORM 4** or a substantially similar writing ("**Agreement to Extend**").
3. **Repeated Requests.** Repeated requests from the same person for the same records that are unchanged or identical to records previously provided or properly denied under the Act shall be deemed unduly burdensome in accordance with Section 3(g) of the Act.
4. **Categorical Requests.**
- (a) If the FOIA Officer determines that a Request filed under Section I of this FOIA Policy for all records falling within a category will unduly burden the School District and that the burden of the School District outweighs the public interest in production of the public records sought, the FOIA Officer will notify the Requestor in writing of that determination, the reasons supporting such determination, and the right of the Requestor to meet with the FOIA Officer in an effort to narrow the request. The notice will be given by use of **FORM 5** or substantially similar writings ("**Notice to Narrow Request**").

- (b) If the Requestor agrees to meet and confer with the FOIA Officer regarding the request, the FOIA Officer will respond to the Request Form, or to the Request Form as narrowed at the meeting, within five working days following the date of the adjournment of the meeting. The response may take any form specified in this Section II.D.
  - (c) If the Requestor does not agree to meet and confer with the FOIA Officer regarding the request, the FOIA Officer may deny the request pursuant to Section II.D(6) below on the fifth working day after the date of the notice given pursuant to Section II.D(4)(a) above.
5. Redacting Information. When a request is made to inspect or copy a public record that contains information that is exempt from disclosure, but also contains information that is not exempt from disclosure, the FOIA Officer may elect to redact the information that is exempt, making available the remaining information for inspection and copying.
6. Denial. If the FOIA Officer determines that all or any part or portion of any public records requested on a Request Form filed pursuant to Section I of this FOIA Policy are not subject to disclosure under the Act or this FOIA Policy, the FOIA Officer will notify the Requestor in writing of that determination, including a detailed factual basis for the application of any exemption claimed, the reason for the denial, and the Requestor's right to judicial review and review by the Public Access Counselor, including the Public Access Counselor's address and phone number ("*Notice of Denial*"). In the event that a Request is denied on the grounds that the records are exempt under Section 7 of the Act, the notice of denial shall specify the exemption claimed to authorize the denial and the specific reasons for the denial, including a detailed factual basis and a citation to supporting legal authority. The notice shall be given by use of **FORM 6** or a substantially similar writing. However, prior to denying a Request based on the exemptions permitted by either Section 7(1)(c) of the Act or Section 7(1)(f) of the Act, the FOIA Officer must follow the procedures set forth in Section III.B of this Policy.

**E. Failure to Respond**

If the FOIA Officer fails to respond to a Request Form properly filed under Section I of this FOIA Policy, the Request will be deemed to be denied as of the last day permitted for the response.

**F. No Obligation to Create New Records**

Except as provided in Section VI below, in responding to Requests to inspect, copy, or certify public records, the Act and this FOIA Policy does not require the School District to create records that the School District does not already maintain in record form.

**III. INTERACTION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR**

**A. The School District's Request for an Advisory Opinion**

In the event that the School District desires an advisory opinion regarding whether it is obligated to comply with any FOIA request, or portion thereof, or other question under the Act, it may request an advisory opinion from the Attorney General by written request of the head of the School District or the School District Attorney pursuant to Section 9.5 (h) of the Freedom of Information Act.

**B. Notice of Intent To Deny**

In accordance with Section 9.5(b) of the Act, if the FOIA Officer determines that the Specified Records are exempt under either Section 7(1)(c) of the Act (personal information) or Section 7(1)(f) of the Act (preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, memoranda and other records which opinions are expressed, or policies or actions are formulated), the FOIA Officer shall, within the time period provided for response, provide written notice to the Requestor and the Public Access Counselor of the School District's intent to deny the Request in whole or in part. This notice shall include a copy of the Request, the proposed response, and a detailed summary of the basis for asserting the exemption and shall be given by use of **FORM 7** or a substantially similar writing ("*Notice of Intent to Deny*"). As provided by Section 9.5(b) of the Act, time for response shall be tolled until the Public Access Counselor concludes his or her review.

**C. Receipt of Request for Review**

In the event that the School District receives a copy of a request for review from the Public Access Counselor which specifies records or other documents that the School District shall furnish to facilitate the review, the School District shall provide copies of the records requested within seven working days and shall otherwise fully cooperate with the Public Access Counselor in accordance with Section 9.5(c) of the Freedom of Information Act. Within seven working days after it receives any copy of a request for review and request for production of records from the Public Access Counselor, the School District may, but is not required to, answer the allegations of the request for review pursuant to Section 9.5(d) of the Act, including filing affidavits or records concerning relevant matters. Records that are obtained by the Public Access Counselor from the School District for purposes of addressing a request for review under Section 9.5 of the Freedom of Information Act will not be disclosed to the public by the Public Access Counselor. The School District may furnish affidavits or records concerning any matter germane to the review.

**D. Mediation**

In the event that the Attorney General chooses to resolve a request for review by mediation or by a means other than the issuance of a binding opinion in accordance with Section 9.5(f) of the Freedom of Information Act, the School District shall cooperate with the Attorney General in that endeavor.

**E. Adherence to Binding Decisions of the Public Access Counselor**

Upon the receipt of a binding opinion from the Public Access Counselor concluding that the School District has violated the Act, the School District, at its discretion, shall either take necessary action as soon as practical to comply with the directive of the opinion or shall have the option of filing an administrative review action pursuant to Section 9.5(f) of the Freedom of Information Act.

**IV. REVIEW OF DENIAL**

**A. Review by Public Access Counselor**

If a Requestor disagrees with a Notice of Denial, then the Requestor may file a request for review with the Public Access Counselor not later than 60 days after the date of the Notice of Denial. The request for review by the Public Access Counselor must be in writing, signed by the Requestor, and include a copy of the Request and the Notice of Denial and any other response from the School District. The Requestor shall also file a written notice of appeal with the School District by use of **FORM 8** or a substantially similar writing ("*Notice of Appeal*").

**B. Judicial Review**

A Requestor denied access to a Specified Record may file suit for injunctive or declaratory relief in the circuit court for the county where the School District is located.

**V. FEES**

**A. Fees Established**

Unless fees are waived or reduced pursuant to Section V.C below, each Requestor must pay the following fees for copying, certification, and mailing of public records, which the School District has determined to be reasonably calculated to reimburse its actual cost for reproducing and certifying public records and for the use, by any person, of the equipment of the School District to copy records:

- |    |                            |    |   |
|----|----------------------------|----|---|
| 1. | Copies — letter or legal   | -- | \$.15 per side.   |
| 2. | Copies — color or oversize | -- | Actual cost of reproduction.  |
| 3. | Certification              | -- | \$1.00 per document plus copy cost.   |
| 4. | Mailing                    | -- | Actual cost of postage.   |
| 5. | Statutory Fees             | -- | Fees otherwise fixed by statute will be imposed at the rates authorized by statute. |
| 6. | Recording Media, whether   | -- | Actual cost to the School District discs, diskettes, tapes or other media           |

However, there will be no charge for the first 50 pages of letter or legal size black and white copies for a Requestor, except for Requests for commercial purposes. When the services of an outside vendor are required to copy a public record, the actual reasonable charges of the outside vendor will be the fees for copying such records, notwithstanding the fees stated above. In the event that the School District provides records in response to a Request but fails to respond within the requisite periods, such copies shall be provided free of charge in accordance with Section 3(d) of the Act.

**B. Method and Time of Payment**

Payment of all required fees must be made in cash, by cashier's or certified check, or by money order prior to the examination, copying, or certification of any public record. If payment is made by cash, a written receipt shall be provided and witnessed, to the extent reasonably possible, by a second School District employee or official.

**C. Waiver of Fees**

The fees provided in Section IV.A above may be waived or reduced by the FOIA Officer or another appropriately authorized official if the Requestor states the specific purpose of the request on the Request Form and establishes to the reasonable satisfaction of the FOIA Officer

that a fee waiver or reduction would be in the public interest. Any request for fee waiver or reduction must be indicated on the Request Form at the time the Request Form is filed. A fee waiver or reduction will be considered to be in the public interest only if the principal purpose of the request is to disseminate information regarding the public health, safety, and welfare or the legal rights of the general public and is not for the principal purpose of personal or commercial benefit to the Requestor. The FOIA Officer may consider the number of requested public records and the cost and necessity of copying them in setting the fee waiver or reduction amount.

## **VI. SCHOOL DISTRICT OBLIGATIONS**

### **A. Organizational Description**

In accordance with Section 4 of the Act, the FOIA Officer will cause the School District to prominently display at each of its offices, make available for inspection, copying, and mailing to any person requesting it, the following information, which shall also be posted on the School District's website, if it has one maintained by the School District's full-time staff:

- a brief description of the School District, identifying and describing the membership of the School District's Corporate Authorities and of all of its standing and special committees and other advisory bodies,
- a short summary of the School District's purpose,
- a block diagram of its functional subdivisions,
- the approximate number of its full and part-time employees,
- identification and membership of advisory boards, commissions, committees, or councils,
- the total amount of its operating budget,
- the number and location of each of its offices,
- a brief description of the methods whereby the public may request information and public records,
- a directory designating the Freedom of Information officer(s),
- the address where requests for public records should be directed, and
- any fees allowable under Section 6 of the Act, as set forth in Section V, above.

### **B. Records Stored by Electronic Data Processing**

The FOIA Officer will prepare and furnish to any person requesting it a description of the manner in which public records of the School District stored by means of electronic data processing may be obtained in a form comprehensible to persons lacking knowledge of computer language or printout format.

### **C. Summary of Procedures**

The FOIA Officer will create, maintain current, and make available for inspection, copying, and mailing a copy of this FOIA Policy containing at a minimum the following: a brief summary of

the procedures established by this FOIA Policy, a directory designating the FOIA Officer, the address where requests for public records should be directed, and any fees allowed.

**D. Posting and Mailing of Information**

The FOIA Officer will keep posted at the School District Administrative Office, and will provide a copy to any person making a request therefor, the Organizational Description prepared pursuant to Section VI.A above and the Summary of Procedures prepared pursuant to Section VI.C above.

**E. Record Keeping**

The FOIA Officer will retain copies of all Requests and documents relating to a Request until the Request is complied with or has been denied. In addition, copies of Requests, any responses including Notices of Denial, and a copy of communications with the Requestor and other communications shall be maintained by the FOIA Officer for the period provided by law.

**F. Documents Immediately Available for Disclosure Upon Request**

The FOIA Officer shall develop a list of documents or categories of records that the School District shall immediately disclose upon request.

## **VII. GENERAL**

**A. Conflicts and Invalidity**

This FOIA Policy does not supersede the provisions of the Act. In the event that this Policy in any way conflicts with the Act, the Act will control over the FOIA Policy. If any provision of the FOIA Policy is deemed illegal or unenforceable, all other provisions and their application will remain unaffected to the extent permitted by law.

**B. Definitions**

In addition to the definitions provided in the Act, the following definitions are applicable to this FOIA Policy:

1. Business Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on a working day.
2. Working Day: Any day on which the School District Administrative Office is open and staffed for regular public business during Business Hours.