



STATE OF INDIANA

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March 18, 2010

Mr. Michael A. Christianson
DOC # 135489
P.O. Box 900
Bunkerhill, IN 46914

Re: *Formal Complaint 10-FC-41; Alleged Violation of the Access to Public Records Act by the Miami Correctional Facility*

Dear Mr. Kay:

This advisory opinion is in response to your formal complaint alleging the Miami Correctional Facility ("Facility") violated the Access to Public Records Act ("APRA"), Ind. Code § 5-14-3-1 *et seq.*, by denying you access to public records. For the following reasons, my opinion is that the Facility did not violate the APRA.

BACKGROUND

According to your complaint, you allege that you requested access to records regarding the name, job title, and job description of employees who work at "MCF, Phase II" in the Facility.

My office forwarded a copy of your complaint to the Facility for a response. Michael J. Barnes, staff attorney for the Facility, states in response to your complaint that Facility informed you that records regarding DOC staff are not subject to disclosure pursuant to I.C. § 5-14-3-4(b)(23).¹ I have enclosed his response for your review.

ANALYSIS

The public policy of the APRA states, "[p]roviding persons with information is an essential function of a representative government and an integral part of the routine duties of public officials and employees, whose duty it is to provide the information." I.C. § 5-14-3-1. The Facility meets the definition of a "public agency" under the APRA. IC 5-14-3-2. Accordingly, any person has the right to inspect and copy the Facility's public

¹ The Facility initially cited to I.C. § 5-14-3-4(23)(a)(I). The Facility acknowledges the error in its response.

records during regular business hours unless the public records are excepted from disclosure as nondisclosable under the APRA. I.C. § 5-14-3-3(a).

It is my understanding based on the Facility's assertion and based on your mailing address that you are confined in a penal institution as the result of the conviction for a crime. As such, you are an "offender" for the purposes of the APRA. *See* I.C. § 5-14-3-2(i). The APRA contains an exception to disclosure for information related to employees of correctional facilities, specifically excepting the following:

- Records requested by an offender that:
 - (A) contain personal information relating to:
 - (i) a correctional officer (as defined in IC 5-10-10-1.5);
 - (ii) the victim of a crime; or
 - (iii) a family member of a correctional officer or the victim of a crime; or
 - (B) concern or could affect the security of a jail or correctional facility.

I.C. § 5-14-3-4(b)(23). Thus, to the extent you are requesting personal information relating to a correctional officer or family member of a correctional officer or records that concern or could affect the facility's security, the Facility acts within its discretion when it denies access to such records. The Facility bears the burden of proof to sustain the denial. *See* I.C. § 5-14-3-1. In my opinion, the Facility will be able to bear that burden.

Moreover, the APRA provides a discretionary exception to disclosure for most personnel file information. While certain personnel file information must be disclosed, the exception provides that the subdivision requiring such disclosure "does not apply to disclosure of personnel information generally on all employees or for groups of employees without the request being particularized by employee name." I.C. § 5-14-3-4(b)(8). In other words, the Department is not required to provide you with the requested information because you have requested the information generally on employees of the facility. *See Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 04-FC-98.*

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, it is my opinion that the Facility did not violate the APRA when it denied your request.

Best regards,



Andrew J. Kossack
Public Access Counselor

Cc: Michael Barnes