



# STATE OF INDIANA

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June 1, 2026

Re: Complaint 25-FC-133  
Justin Vasel (Complainant) v.  
Indiana University (Respondent)

This advisory opinion is issued in response to the above-referenced complaint filed June 30, 2025.

A Notice of Complaint, along with a copy of the complaint, was sent to the Respondent on October 14, 2025, requesting a formal response by November 12, 2025. A formal response, submitted by Taylor Struble, Assistant General Counsel on behalf of Respondent, was received on February 10, 2026.

The complaint alleges that Respondent violated the Access to Public Records Act (APRA) by requiring records requests to be submitted on the public portal.

## **ANALYSIS**

The public policy of APRA states that “[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.” Indiana Code (IC) 5-14-3-1. Respondent is a public agency for purposes of APRA; and therefore, subject to the requirements. IC 5-14-3-2(q). As a result, unless an exception applies, any person has the right to inspect and copy Respondent’s public records during regular business hours. IC 5-14-3-3(a).

Complainant filed an APRA request on June 13, 2025, by hand delivering the request for public records to Respondent. When Complainant tried to deliver the request to the Board of Trustees, he was redirected to the Office of the Vice President and General Counsel (VPGC) in Bryan Hall. A staff member met Complainant at Bryan Hall, where Complainant delivered an APRA request for public records.

Shortly after delivering the records request to the building administrator at Bryan Hall and on that same day, Complainant received a telephone call from

staff at VPGC directing him to file the request for public records online and provided the website to access the portal. Complainant states that the staff member advised Complainant that staff could not accept in-person requests and that an attorney would follow up with Complainant. Complainant contends that no attorney reached out to discuss the request, and therefore, he filed this complaint.

Complainant raised several issues related to this complaint, but Complainant subsequently filed his APRA request online and received the requested records. The issues raised were not related to the subject matter of the complaint or timeliness of a response. Instead, the sole issue moving forward is whether Respondent could require APRA requests to be submitted through the APRA portal.

APRA provides that a request for inspection or copying of public records must:

- 1) Identify with reasonable particularity the record being requested; and
- 2) Be, at the discretion of the agency, in writing on or in a form provided by the agency.

IC 5-14-3-3(a).

This office has held numerous times that APRA requests must be submitted on the form required by the public agency.

*APRA allows for public agencies to have discretion over the method they have requesters submit their public records requests. See Ind. Code § 5-14-3(a)(2). So long as these methods are accessible to the public and uniform amongst all requesters, this is standard and compliant.*

*Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 24-FC-36.*

Our review of the statute and prior opinions from this office provides that public agencies are allowed to create and use forms for APRA requests. This office gives deference to public agencies in creating the forms for its APRA request process. *Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 25-FC-114.*

*Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 13-FC-353 states:*

*I do not find that IU's requirement of a centralized repository for requests violates the APRA. In fact, the public may be better served by an agency of IU's size to have a consistent system for receiving requests. This prevents requests from "slipping through the cracks" if they are made in various forms. I also do not believe that this precludes in-person requests. In fact, the policy explicitly provides that personnel receiving requests should direct the requesting party to the appropriate form. That assistance, in and*

*of itself, is an acknowledgment of the request. I do not think the public is prejudiced in any way by this system.*

Earlier in *Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 13-FC-353*, the purpose of IC 5-14-3-9 (b) and (c) seems to be clarified in that the point of these sections is to either allow for:

- acknowledgement that the request was received, or
- constructive denial, if no acknowledgement is received.

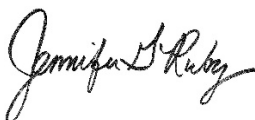
Here, as in *13-FC-353*, the in-person request was acknowledged. However, that acknowledgement included a request that the submission information be entered into the online portal.

Respondent does not deny access to the record by requiring every request to proceed through the portal. An in-person request can be referred to the online portal to fully complete the request for public records.

However, no one should be denied access because they cannot navigate the process. In instances, where a requestor lacks computer access, has a physical impairment, or has minimal computer literacy, etc., they should be accommodated should they ask for assistance. Public agencies should uphold the rights and access contemplated by the statute.

## **CONCLUSION**

This office finds that the Respondent did not violate APRA as alleged in the complaint.



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Public Access Counselor