



# STATE OF INDIANA

**MIKE BRAUN, Governor**

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April 27, 2026

Re: Complaint 25-FC-276  
Stephen R. Edwards (Complainant) v.  
Washington County Coroner (Respondent)

This advisory opinion is issued in response to the above-referenced complaint filed October 7, 2025.

A Notice of Complaint, along with a copy of the complaint, was sent to the Respondent on January 15, 2026, requesting a formal response by February 13, 2026. A formal response, submitted by Washington County Coroner Shawnda Keltner on behalf of Respondent, was received in this office on January 16, 2026.

The complaint alleges that Respondent violated the Access to Public Records Act (APRA) by failing to provide a copy of an autopsy report.

## **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 left multiple messages with Respondent asking for copies of the autopsy and toxicology reports, starting on June 5, 2025. Respondent returned the call but only provided the toxicology report. Repeated phone calls have been made for the autopsy report, which were not returned. Complainant mailed a formal request on September 10, 2025, to which he states there has been no response.

Respondent in its formal response stated: "This issue has been addressed previously, multiple times. I have not provided an autopsy report, because an autopsy was not performed. Therefore, there is no report to provide. A toxicology report has been given to the family of Mr. Jacobs, as well as to Mr. Edwards. I cannot provide a report that is not in existence."

The Public Access Counselor has on numerous occasions opined that the public agency is not required to provide records that do not exist nor is it required to create such records. *Opinion of the Public Access Counselor 25-FC-112.*

## **CONCLUSION**

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer G. Ruby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer G. Ruby  
Public Access Counselor