

## 3357:13-16-17: Public Records Request

### Introduction:

It is the policy of North Central State College that openness leads to a better informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is the policy of North Central State College to strictly adhere to the state's Public Records Act. All exemptions to openness are to be construed in their narrowest sense and any denial of public records in response to a valid request must be accompanied by an explanation, including legal authority, as outlined in the Ohio Revised Code. If the request is in writing, the explanation must also be in writing.

### Section 1: Public Records

The Ohio Revised Code defines records as including the following: any document – paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, e-mail), or other format – that is created or received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of a public office that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the office. All records of North Central State College are public unless they are specifically exempt from disclosure under the Ohio Revised Code.

#### Section 1.1

It is the policy of North Central State College that, as required by Ohio law, records will be organized and maintained so that they are readily available for inspection and copying. Record retention schedules may be requested through the Human Resources office.

### Section 2: Record Requests

Each request for public records will be evaluated for a response using the following guidelines:

#### Section 2.1

Although no specific language is required to make a request, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow North Central State College to identify, retrieve, and review the records. If it is not clear what records are being sought, the Director of Human Resources (records custodian) must contact the requester for clarification, and will assist the requestor in revising the request by informing the requestor of the manner in which the office keeps its records.

#### Section 2.2

The requester does not have to put a records request in writing, and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record.

#### Section 2.3

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours, with the exception of published holidays. Public records will be made available for inspection promptly. Copies of public records will be made available within a reasonable period of time. "Prompt" and "reasonable" take into account the volume of records requested; the proximity of the location where the records are stored; and the necessity for any legal review of the records requested.

## Section 2.4

Each request will be evaluated for an estimated length of time required to gather the records. Routine requests for records will be satisfied immediately if feasible to do so. Routine requests include, but are not limited to, meeting minutes (both in draft and final form), budgets, salary information, forms and applications, personnel rosters, etc. If fewer than 20 pages of copies are requested or if the records are readily available in an electronic format that can be e-mailed or downloaded easily, these will be made as quickly as the equipment allows. If additional copies are requested, an appointment shall be made with the requester on when the copies or computer files can be picked up.

All requests for public records must either be satisfied (see Section 2.4) or be acknowledged in writing by the North Central State College within five business days following receipt of the request. If a request is deemed significantly beyond “routine,” such as seeking a voluminous number of copies or requiring extensive research, the acknowledgement will include at least the following terms:

Section 2.4a – An estimated cost if copies are requested.

Section 2.4b – Any items within the request that may be exempt from disclosure.

## Section 2.5

Any denial of public records requested will include an explanation, including legal authority. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions will be redacted and the rest released. If there are redactions, each redaction will be accompanied by a supporting explanation, including legal authority.

## Section 3: Costs for Public Records

Those seeking public records will be charged only the actual cost of making copies.

Section 3.1 The charge for paper copies is 5 cents per page.

Section 3.2 The charge for downloaded computer files to a compact disc is \$1 per disc.

Section 3.3 There is no charge for documents e-mailed.

## Section 3.4

Requesters may ask that documents be mailed to them. They will be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies.

## Section 4: E-mail

Documents in electronic mail format are records as defined by the Ohio Revised Code when their content relates to the business of North Central State College. E-mail is treated in the same fashion as records in other formats and follows the same retention schedules.

Section 4.1 – Records in private e-mail accounts used to conduct public business are subject to disclosure, and all employees or representatives of North Central State College will retain their e-mails that relate to public business (see Section 1 Public Records) and copy them to their business e-mail accounts and/or to the office's records custodian.

Section 4.2 – The records custodian is to treat the e-mails from private accounts as records of the public office, filing them in the appropriate way, retaining them per established schedules and making them available for inspection and copying in accordance with the Public Records Act.

Section 5: Failure to respond to a public records request

North Central State College recognizes the legal and non-legal consequences of failure to properly respond to a public records request. In addition to the distrust in government that failure to comply may cause, North Central State College's failure to comply with a request may result in a court ordering North Central State College to comply with the law and to pay the requester attorney's fees and damages.

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Approved by President's Staff: October 30, 2007  
CFO (Human Resources)