

**MINNESOTA GOVERNMENT DATA PRACTICES ACT
PROPOSED STATUTORY REVISIONS¹**

13.01 GOVERNMENT DATA.

Subdivision 1. Applicability. All government entities shall be governed by this chapter.

Subd. 2. Citation. This chapter may be cited as the "Minnesota Government Data Practices Act."

Subd. 3. Scope. This chapter regulates the collection, creation, storage, maintenance, dissemination, and access to government data in government entities. It establishes a presumption that government data are public and are accessible by the public for both inspection and copying unless there is federal law, a state statute, or a temporary classification of data that provides that certain data are not public.

Subd. 4. Headnotes. The headnotes printed in boldface type before paragraphs in this chapter are mere catchwords to indicate the content of a paragraph and are not part of the statute.

Subd. 5. Provisions coded in other chapters. (a) The sections referenced in this chapter that are codified outside this chapter classify government data as other than public, place restrictions on access to government data, or involve data sharing.

(b) Those sections are governed by the definitions and general provisions in sections 13.01 to 13.07 and the remedies and penalties provided in sections 13.08 and 13.09, except:

(1) for records of the judiciary, as provided in section 13.90; or

(2) as specifically provided otherwise by law.

**13.02 COLLECTION, SECURITY, AND DISSEMINATION OF RECORDS;
DEFINITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** As used in this chapter, the terms defined in this section have the meanings given them.

Subd. 2. **Commissioner.** "Commissioner" means the commissioner of the Department of Administration.

Subd. 3. **Confidential data on individuals.** "Confidential data on individuals" means data

¹ Note that only selected sections of Chapter 13 of the Minnesota Statutes are included in the proposed statutory revisions.

which is made not public by statute or federal law applicable to the data and is inaccessible to the individual subject of that data.

Subd. 3a. **Criminal justice agencies.** "Criminal justice agencies" means all state and local prosecution authorities, all state and local law enforcement agencies, the Sentencing Guidelines Commission, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Department of Corrections, and all probation officers who are not part of the judiciary.

Subd. 4. **Data not on individuals.** "Data not on individuals" means all government data which is not data on individuals.

Subd. 5. **Data on individuals.** "Data on individuals" means all government data in which any individual is or can be identified as the subject of that data, unless the appearance of the name or other identifying data can be clearly demonstrated to be only incidental to the data and the data are not accessed by the name or other identifying data of any individual.

Subd. 6. **Designee.** "Designee" means any person designated by a responsible authority to be in charge of individual files or systems containing government data and to receive and comply with requests for government data.

Subd. 7. **Government data.** "Government data" means all data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by any government entity regardless of its physical form, storage media or conditions of use.

Subd. 7a. **Government entity.** "Government entity" means a state agency, statewide system, or political subdivision. "Government entity" includes any other body which is created by state or local authority or which is primarily funded by or through state or local authority.

Subd. 8. **Individual.** "Individual" means a natural person. In the case of a minor or an incapacitated person as defined in section 524.5-102, subdivision 6, "individual" includes a parent or guardian or an individual acting as a parent or guardian in the absence of a parent or guardian, except that the responsible authority shall withhold data from parents or guardians, or individuals acting as parents or guardians in the absence of parents or guardians, upon request by the minor if the responsible authority determines that withholding the data would be in the best interest of the minor.

Subd. 8a. **Not public data.** "Not public data" means any government data which is classified by statute, federal law, or temporary classification as confidential, private, nonpublic, or protected nonpublic.

Subd. 9. **Nonpublic data.** "Nonpublic data" means data not on individuals that is made by statute or federal law applicable to the data: (a) not accessible to the public; and (b) accessible to the subject, if any, of the data.

Subd. 10. **Person.** "Person" means any individual, partnership, corporation, association, business trust, or a legal representative of an organization.

Subd. 11. **Political subdivision.** "Political subdivision" means any county, statutory or home rule charter city, school district, special district, any town exercising powers under chapter 368 and located in the metropolitan area, as defined in section 473.121, subdivision 2, and any board, commission, district or authority created pursuant to law, local ordinance or charter provision. It includes any nonprofit corporation which is a community action agency organized pursuant to the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-452) as amended, to qualify for public funds, or any nonprofit social service agency which performs services under contract to a government entity, to the extent that the nonprofit social service agency or nonprofit corporation collects, stores, disseminates, and uses data on individuals because of a contractual relationship with a government entity.

Subd. 12. **Private data on individuals.** "Private data on individuals" means data which is made by statute or federal law applicable to the data: (a) not public; and (b) accessible to the individual subject of that data.

Subd. 13. **Protected nonpublic data.** "Protected nonpublic data" means data not on individuals which is made by statute or federal law applicable to the data (a) not public and (b) not accessible to the subject of the data.

Subd. 14. **Public data not on individuals.** "Public data not on individuals" means data which is accessible to the public pursuant to section 13.03.

Subd. 15. **Public data on individuals.** "Public data on individuals" means data which is accessible to the public in accordance with the provisions of section 13.03.

Subd. 16. **Responsible authority.** "Responsible authority" in a state agency or statewide system means the state official designated by law or by the commissioner as the individual responsible for the collection, use and dissemination of any set of data on individuals, government data, or summary data. "Responsible authority" in any political subdivision means the individual designated by the governing body of that political subdivision as the individual responsible for the collection, use, and dissemination of any set of data on individuals, government data, or summary data, unless otherwise provided by state law.

Subd. 17. **State agency.** "State agency" means the state, the University of Minnesota, and any office, officer, department, division, bureau, board, commission, authority, district or agency of the state.

Subd. 18. **Statewide system.** "Statewide system" includes any record keeping system in which government data is collected, stored, disseminated and used by means of a system common to one or more state agencies or more than one of its political subdivisions or any

combination of state agencies and political subdivisions.

Subd. 19. **Summary data.** "Summary data" means statistical records and reports derived from data on individuals but in which individuals are not identified and from which neither their identities nor any other characteristic that could uniquely identify an individual is ascertainable.

13.03 ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT DATA.

Subdivision 1. **Public data.** All government data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by a government entity shall be public unless classified by statute, or temporary classification pursuant to section 13.06, or federal law, as nonpublic or protected nonpublic, or with respect to data on individuals, as private or confidential. The responsible authority in every government entity shall keep records containing government data in such an arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use. Photographic, photostatic, microphotographic, or microfilmed records shall be considered as accessible for convenient use regardless of the size of such records.

Subd. 2. **Procedures.** (a) The responsible authority in every government entity shall establish procedures, consistent with this chapter, to insure that requests for government data are received and complied with in an appropriate and prompt manner.

(b) The responsible authority shall prepare public access procedures in written form and update them no later than August 1 of each year as necessary to reflect any changes in personnel or circumstances that might affect public access to government data. The responsible authority shall make copies of the written public access procedures easily available to the public by distributing free copies of the procedures to the public or by posting a copy of the procedures in a conspicuous place within the government entity that is easily accessible to the public.

(c) Full convenience and comprehensive accessibility shall be allowed to researchers including historians, genealogists and other scholars to carry out extensive research and complete copying of all records containing government data except as otherwise expressly provided by law. A responsible authority may designate one or more designees.

Subd. 3. **Request for access to data.** (a) Upon request to a responsible authority or designee, a person shall be permitted to inspect and copy public government data at reasonable times and places, and, upon request, shall be informed of the data's meaning. If a person requests access for the purpose of inspection, the responsible authority may not assess a charge or require the requesting person to pay a fee to inspect data.

(b) For purposes of this section, "inspection" includes, but is not limited to, the visual inspection of paper and similar types of government data. Inspection does not include printing copies by the government entity, unless printing a copy is the only method to provide for inspection of the data. In the case of data stored in electronic form and made available in electronic form on a remote access basis to the public by the government entity, inspection

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includes remote access to the data by the public and the ability to print copies of or download the data on the public's own computer equipment. Nothing in this section prohibits a government entity from charging a reasonable fee for remote access to data under a specific statutory grant of authority. A government entity may charge a fee for remote access to data where either the data or the access is enhanced at the request of the person seeking access.

(c) The responsible authority or designee shall provide copies of public data upon request.

Each responsible authority shall calculate and disclose actual cost of reproduction for reproducing documents, but in any event may not exceed \$.20 per page for reproducing and certifying public records and for the use, by any person, of the equipment of the government entity to copy records. Such fees shall exclude the costs of any search for and review of the record. Such fees shall be imposed according to a standard scale of fees, established and made public by the responsible authority or government entity imposing them.

~~If a person requests copies or electronic transmittal of the data to the person, the responsible authority may require the requesting person to pay the actual costs of searching for and retrieving government data, including the cost of employee time, and for making, certifying, and electronically transmitting the copies of the data or the data, but may not charge for separating public from not public data. However, if 100 or fewer pages of black and white, letter or legal size paper copies are requested, actual costs shall not be used, and instead, the responsible authority may charge no more than 25 cents for each page copied. If the responsible authority or designee is not able to provide copies at the time a request is made, copies shall be supplied as soon as reasonably possible.~~

(d) Copies of data shall be furnished without charge if the person requesting the data states the specific purpose for the request and indicates that a waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest. Waiver or reduction of the fee is in the public interest if: the requestor is the news media; the requestor is a non-profit organization; or if the principal purpose of the request is to access and disseminate information regarding the health, safety and welfare or the legal rights of the general public and is not for the principal purpose of personal or commercial benefit. In setting the amount of the waiver or reduction, the government entity may take into consideration the amount of materials requested and the cost of copying them.

(e) Copies of data shall be furnished without charge or at a reasonable reduced charge, as determined by the government entity, if the person requesting the documents asks that the documents be provided in electronic form. For purposes of this subsection, "reasonable reduced charge" means the actual cost of any media used in providing the information, including but not limited to, computer disks and CDROMs, as well as the use, by any person, of the equipment of the public body to create such records, but excludes the costs of any search for and review of the documents.

~~(f)~~ When a request under this subdivision involves any person's receipt of copies of public government data that has commercial value and is a substantial and discrete portion of or an entire formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, process, database, or

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system developed with a significant expenditure of public funds by the government entity, the responsible authority may charge a reasonable fee for the information in addition to the costs of making, certifying, and compiling the copies. Any fee charged must be clearly demonstrated by the government entity to relate to the actual development costs of the information. The responsible authority, upon the request of any person, shall provide sufficient documentation to explain and justify the fee being charged.

~~(eg) This chapter requires a government entity to create a new public record if the government entity can create the data by a reasonable manipulation of software, electronic records or Internet website records. For purposes of this chapter, a government entity's maintaining of records includes access to its electronic records or accounts maintained on Internet websites. The responsible authority of a government entity that maintains public government data in a computer storage medium shall provide to any person making a request under this section a copy of any public data contained in that medium, in electronic form, if the government entity can reasonably make the copy or have a copy made. This does not require a government entity to provide the data in an electronic format or program that is different from the format or program in which the data are maintained by the government entity. The entity may require the requesting person to pay the actual cost of providing the copy.~~

~~(fh) If the responsible authority or designee determines that the requested data is classified so as to deny the requesting person access, the responsible authority or designee shall inform the requesting person of the determination either orally at the time of the request, or in writing as soon after that time as possible, and shall cite the specific statutory section, temporary classification, or specific provision of federal law on which the determination is based. Upon the request of any person denied access to data, the responsible authority or designee shall certify in writing that the request has been denied and cite the specific statutory section, temporary classification, or specific provision of federal law upon which the denial was based.~~

~~(i) If any data that is exempt from disclosure under this chapter contains any material which is not exempt, the government entity shall delete the information which is exempt and make the remaining information available for inspection and copying. The government entity shall fulfill the requirements of this subsection regardless of whether the person requesting data under this chapter specifically requests that this subsection apply to his or her request.~~

~~(j) A person has a right to subscribe to future issuances of government data that are created, issued, or disseminated on a regular basis. A subscription shall be valid for up to 6 months, at the request of the subscriber, and shall be renewable.~~

~~(k)(1) Each government entity shall make available for public inspection and copying copies of all data, regardless of form or format, which have been released to any person under this chapter and which, because of the nature of their subject matter, the government entity determines have become or are likely to become the subject of subsequent requests for substantially the same data.~~

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(2) In making any data available to a person under this chapter, a government entity shall provide the data in any form or format requested by the person if the data is readily reproducible by the agency in that form or format. Each government entity shall make reasonable efforts to maintain its data in forms or formats that are reproducible for purposes of this chapter.

Subd. 4. Change in classification of data; effect of dissemination among agencies. (a) The classification of data in the possession of an entity shall change if it is required to do so to comply with either judicial or administrative rules pertaining to the conduct of legal actions or with a specific statute applicable to the data in the possession of the disseminating or receiving entity.

(b) If data on individuals is classified as both private and confidential by this chapter, or any other statute or federal law, the data is private.

(c) To the extent that government data is disseminated to a government entity by another government entity, the data disseminated shall have the same classification in the hands of the entity receiving it as it had in the hands of the entity providing it.

(d) If a government entity disseminates data to another government entity, a classification provided for by law in the hands of the entity receiving the data does not affect the classification of the data in the hands of the entity that disseminates the data.

(e) To the extent that judicial branch data is disseminated to government entities by the judicial branch, the data disseminated shall have the same level of accessibility in the hands of the agency receiving it as it had in the hands of the judicial branch entity providing it.

Subd. 5. Copyright or patent of government data. A government entity may enforce a copyright or acquire a patent for a computer software program or components of a program created by that government entity without statutory authority. In the event that a government entity acquires a patent to a computer software program or component of a program, the data shall be treated as trade secret information pursuant to section 13.37.

Subd. 6. Discoverability of not public data. If a government entity opposes discovery of government data or release of data pursuant to court order on the grounds that the data are classified as not public, the party that seeks access to the data may bring before the appropriate presiding judicial officer, arbitrator, or administrative law judge an action to compel discovery or an action in the nature of an action to compel discovery.

The presiding officer shall first decide whether the data are discoverable or releasable pursuant to the rules of evidence and of criminal, civil, or administrative procedure appropriate to the action.

If the data are discoverable the presiding officer shall decide whether the benefit to the party seeking access to the data outweighs any harm to the confidentiality interests of the entity

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maintaining the data, or of any person who has provided the data or who is the subject of the data, or to the privacy interest of an individual identified in the data. In making the decision, the presiding officer shall consider whether notice to the subject of the data is warranted and, if warranted, what type of notice must be given. The presiding officer may fashion and issue any protective orders necessary to assure proper handling of the data by the parties. If the data are a videotape of a child victim or alleged victim alleging, explaining, denying, or describing an act of physical or sexual abuse, the presiding officer shall consider the provisions of section 611A.90, subdivision 2, paragraph (b).

Subd. 7. Data transferred to archives. When government data that is classified as not public by this chapter or any other statute, including private data on decedents and confidential data on decedents, is physically transferred to the state archives, the data shall no longer be classified as not public and access to and use of the data shall be governed by section 138.17.

Subd. 8. Change to classification of data not on individuals. Except for security information, nonpublic and protected nonpublic data shall become public either ten years after the creation of the data by the government entity or ten years after the data was received or collected by any governmental entity unless the responsible authority for the originating or custodial entity for the data reasonably determines that, if the data were made available to the public or to the data subject, the harm to the public or to a data subject would outweigh the benefit to the public or to the data subject. If the responsible authority denies access to the data, the person denied access may challenge the denial by bringing an action in district court seeking release of the data. The action shall be brought in the district court located in the county where the data are being maintained, or, in the case of data maintained by a state agency, in any county. The data in dispute shall be examined by the court in camera. In deciding whether or not to release the data, the court shall consider the benefits and harms in the same manner as set forth above. The court shall make a written statement of findings in support of its decision.

Subd. 9. Effect of changes in classification of data. Unless otherwise expressly provided by a particular statute, the classification of data is determined by the law applicable to the data at the time a request for access to the data is made, regardless of the data's classification at the time it was collected, created, or received.

Subd. 10. Costs for providing copies of data. Money collected by a responsible authority in a state agency for the actual cost to the agency of providing copies or electronic transmittal of government data is appropriated to the agency and added to the appropriations from which the costs were paid.

Subd. 11. Treatment of data classified as not public; public meetings. Not public data may be discussed at a meeting open to the public to the extent provided in section 13D.05.

Subd. 12. Pleadings. Pleadings, as defined by court rule, served by or on a government entity, are public data to the same extent that the data would be public if filed with the court.

13.04 RIGHTS OF SUBJECTS OF DATA.

Subdivision 1. **Type of data.** The rights of individuals on whom the data is stored or to be stored shall be as set forth in this section.

Subd. 2. **Tennessee warning.** An individual asked to supply private or confidential data concerning the individual shall be informed of: (a) the purpose and intended use of the requested data within the collecting government entity; (b) whether the individual may refuse or is legally required to supply the requested data; (c) any known consequence arising from supplying or refusing to supply private or confidential data; and (d) the identity of other persons or entities authorized by state or federal law to receive the data. This requirement shall not apply when an individual is asked to supply investigative data, pursuant to section 13.82, subdivision 7, to a law enforcement officer.

Subd. 3. **Access to data by individual.** Upon request to a responsible authority or designee, an individual shall be informed whether the individual is the subject of stored data on individuals, and whether it is classified as public, private or confidential. Upon further request, an individual who is the subject of stored private or public data on individuals shall be shown the data without any charge and, if desired, shall be informed of the content and meaning of that data. After an individual has been shown the private data and informed of its meaning, the data need not be disclosed to that individual for six months thereafter unless a dispute or action pursuant to this section is pending or additional data on the individual has been collected or created. The responsible authority or designee shall provide copies of the private or public data upon request by the individual subject of the data.

The responsible authority or designee may require the requesting person to pay the actual costs of making and certifying the copies. The responsible authority or designee shall comply immediately, if possible, with any request made pursuant to this subdivision, or within ten days of the date of the request, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays, if immediate compliance is not possible.

Subd. 4. **Procedure when data is not accurate or complete.** (a) An individual subject of the data may contest the accuracy or completeness of public or private data. To exercise this right, an individual shall notify in writing the responsible authority describing the nature of the disagreement. The responsible authority shall within 30 days either: (1) correct the data found to be inaccurate or incomplete and attempt to notify past recipients of inaccurate or incomplete data, including recipients named by the individual; or (2) notify the individual that the authority believes the data to be correct. Data in dispute shall be disclosed only if the individual's statement of disagreement is included with the disclosed data.

The determination of the responsible authority may be appealed pursuant to the provisions of the Administrative Procedure Act relating to contested cases. Upon receipt of an appeal by an individual, the commissioner shall, before issuing the order and notice of a contested case hearing required by chapter 14, try to resolve the dispute through education, conference,

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conciliation, or persuasion. If the parties consent, the commissioner may refer the matter to mediation. Following these efforts, the commissioner shall dismiss the appeal or issue the order and notice of hearing.

(b) Data on individuals that have been successfully challenged by an individual must be completed, corrected, or destroyed by a government entity without regard to the requirements of section 138.17.

After completing, correcting, or destroying successfully challenged data, a government entity may retain a copy of the commissioner of administration's order issued under chapter 14 or, if no order were issued, a summary of the dispute between the parties that does not contain any particulars of the successfully challenged data.

13.05 DUTIES OF RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY.

Subdivision 1. **Public document of data categories.** The responsible authority shall prepare a public document containing the authority's name, title and address, and a description of each category of record, file, or process relating to private or confidential data on individuals maintained by the authority's government entity. Forms used to collect private and confidential data shall be included in the public document. Beginning August 1, 1977 and annually thereafter, the responsible authority shall update the public document and make any changes necessary to maintain the accuracy of the document. The document shall be available from the responsible authority to the public in accordance with the provisions of sections 13.03 and 15.17.

Subd. 2. **Copies to commissioner.** The commissioner may require responsible authorities to submit copies of the public document required in subdivision 1, and may request additional information relevant to data collection practices, policies and procedures.

Subd. 3. **General standards for collection and storage.** Collection and storage of all data on individuals and the use and dissemination of private and confidential data on individuals shall be limited to that necessary for the administration and management of programs specifically authorized by the legislature or local governing body or mandated by the federal government.

Subd. 4. **Limitations on collection and use of data.** Private or confidential data on an individual shall not be collected, stored, used, or disseminated by government entities for any purposes other than those stated to the individual at the time of collection in accordance with section 13.04, except as provided in this subdivision.

(a) Data collected prior to August 1, 1975, and which have not been treated as public data, may be used, stored, and disseminated for the purposes for which the data was originally collected or for purposes which are specifically approved by the commissioner as necessary to public health, safety, or welfare.

(b) Private or confidential data may be used and disseminated to individuals or entities specifically authorized access to that data by state, local, or federal law enacted or promulgated after the collection of the data.

(c) Private or confidential data may be used and disseminated to individuals or entities subsequent to the collection of the data when the responsible authority maintaining the data has requested approval for a new or different use or dissemination of the data and that request has been specifically approved by the commissioner as necessary to carry out a function assigned by law.

(d) Private data may be used by and disseminated to any person or entity if the individual subject or subjects of the data have given their informed consent. Whether a data subject has given informed consent shall be determined by rules of the commissioner. The format for informed consent is as follows, unless otherwise prescribed by the HIPAA, Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information, 65 Fed. Reg. 82, 461 (2000) (to be codified as Code of Federal Regulations, title 45, section 164): informed consent shall not be deemed to have been given by an individual subject of the data by the signing of any statement authorizing any person or entity to disclose information about the individual to an insurer or its authorized representative, unless the statement is:

(1) in plain language;

(2) dated;

(3) specific in designating the particular persons or agencies the data subject is authorizing to disclose information about the data subject;

(4) specific as to the nature of the information the subject is authorizing to be disclosed;

(5) specific as to the persons or entities to whom the subject is authorizing information to be disclosed;

(6) specific as to the purpose or purposes for which the information may be used by any of the parties named in clause (5), both at the time of the disclosure and at any time in the future;

(7) specific as to its expiration date which should be within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed one year except in the case of authorizations given in connection with applications for (i) life insurance or noncancelable or guaranteed renewable health insurance and identified as such, two years after the date of the policy or (ii) medical assistance under chapter 256B or MinnesotaCare under chapter 256L, which shall be ongoing during all terms of eligibility, for individual education plan health-related services provided by a school district under section 125A.21, subdivision 2.

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The responsible authority may require a person requesting copies of data under this paragraph to pay the actual costs of making, certifying, and compiling the copies.

(e) Private or confidential data on an individual may be discussed at a meeting open to the public to the extent provided in section 13D.05.

Subd. 5. Data protection. (a) The responsible authority shall (1) establish procedures to assure that all data on individuals is accurate, complete, and current for the purposes for which it was collected; and (2) establish appropriate security safeguards for all records containing data on individuals.

(b) When not public data is being disposed of, the data must be destroyed in a way that prevents its contents from being determined.

Subd. 6. Contracts. Except as provided in section 13.46, subdivision 5, in any contract between a government entity subject to this chapter and any person, when the contract requires that data on individuals be made available to the contracting parties by the government entity, that data shall be administered consistent with this chapter. A contracting party shall maintain the data on individuals which it received according to the statutory provisions applicable to the data.

Subd. 7. Preparation of summary data. The use of summary data derived from private or confidential data on individuals under the jurisdiction of one or more responsible authorities is permitted. Unless classified pursuant to section 13.06, another statute, or federal law, summary data is public. The responsible authority shall prepare summary data from private or confidential data on individuals upon the request of any person if the request is in writing and the cost of preparing the summary data is borne by the requesting person. The responsible authority may delegate the power to prepare summary data (1) to the administrative officer responsible for any central repository of summary data; or (2) to a person outside of the entity if the person's purpose is set forth, in writing, and the person agrees not to disclose, and the entity reasonably determines that the access will not compromise private or confidential data on individuals.

Subd. 8. Publication of access procedures. The responsible authority shall prepare a public document setting forth in writing the rights of the data subject pursuant to section 13.04 and the specific procedures in effect in the government entity for access by the data subject to public or private data on individuals.

Subd. 9. Intergovernmental access of data. A responsible authority shall allow another responsible authority access to data classified as not public only when the access is authorized or required by statute or federal law. An entity that supplies government data under this subdivision may require the requesting entity to pay the actual cost of supplying the data.

Subd. 10. International dissemination. No government entity shall transfer or disseminate any private or confidential data on individuals to the private international organization known as Interpol, except through the Interpol-United States National Central Bureau, United States

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Department of Justice.

Subd. 11. **Privatization.** (a) If a government entity enters into a contract with a private person to perform any of its functions, the government entity shall include in the contract terms that make it clear that all of the data created, collected, received, stored, used, maintained, or disseminated by the private person in performing those functions is subject to the requirements of this chapter and that the private person must comply with those requirements as if it were a government entity.

The remedies in section 13.08 apply to the private person under this subdivision.

(b) This subdivision does not create a duty on the part of the private person to provide access to public data to the public if the public data are available from the government entity, except as required by the terms of the contract.

Subd. 12. **Identification or justification.** Unless specifically authorized by statute, government entities may not require persons to identify themselves, state a reason for, or justify a request to gain access to public government data. A person may be asked to provide certain identifying or clarifying information for the sole purpose of facilitating access to the data.

Subd. 13. **Data practices compliance official.** By December 1, 2000, each responsible authority or other appropriate authority in every government entity shall appoint or designate an employee of the government entity to act as the entity's data practices compliance official. The data practices compliance official is the designated employee of the government entity to whom persons may direct questions or concerns regarding problems in obtaining access to data or other data practices problems. The responsible authority may be the data practices compliance official.

13.08 CIVIL REMEDIES.

Subdivision 1. **Action for damages.** (a) Notwithstanding section 466.03, a responsible authority or government entity which violates any provision of this chapter is liable to a person or representative of a decedent who suffers any damage as a result of the violation, and the person damaged or a representative in the case of private data on decedents or confidential data on decedents may bring an action against the responsible authority or government entity to cover any damages sustained, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees. In the case of a willful violation, the government entity shall, in addition, be liable to exemplary damages of not less than \$1,000, nor more than \$15,000 for each violation. The state is deemed to have waived any immunity to a cause of action brought under this chapter.

(b) The appropriate State's Attorney or the Attorney General's office may bring a civil or criminal action to enforce this chapter. As soon as a lawsuit has been filed, the government entity may not avoid the penalties set forth in this section by providing the plaintiff, State's Attorney or Attorney General with copies of the requested data or by allowing the requested inspection of the data.

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(c) A lawsuit may be brought under subsections (a) or (b) of this section against a government entity for failing to appoint a Responsible Authority. In such a case, the government entity shall be the appropriate defendant. In cases in which a government employee gains access to government data and violates this chapter, he or she will be considered the Responsible Authority for purposes of bringing an action under subsections (a) or (b) of this section. However, if the government employee is acting outside of his or her scope of employment, the government entity shall be the appropriate defendant.

Subd. 2. **Injunction.** A responsible authority or government entity which violates or proposes to violate this chapter may be enjoined by the district court. The court may make any order or judgment as may be necessary to prevent the use or employment by any person of any practices which violate this chapter.

Subd. 3. **Venue.** An action filed pursuant to this section may be commenced in the county in which the individual alleging damage or seeking relief resides, or in the county wherein the political subdivision exists, or, in the case of the state, any county.

Subd. 4. **Action to compel compliance.** (a) In addition to the remedies provided in subdivisions 1 to 3 or any other law, any aggrieved person seeking to enforce the person's rights under this chapter or obtain access to data may bring an action in district court to compel compliance with this chapter and may recover costs and disbursements, ~~including reasonable attorney's fees,~~ as determined by the court, including reasonable attorney's fees. ~~If the court determines that an action brought under this subdivision is frivolous and without merit and a basis in fact, it may award reasonable costs and attorney fees to the responsible authority.~~ If the court issues an order to compel compliance under this subdivision, the court may impose a civil penalty of up to \$1,000 against the government entity and shall award a plaintiff reasonable attorneys' fees and costs regardless of whether the person is represented by counsel or is pro se. This penalty is payable to the state general fund and is in addition to damages under subdivision 1. If the court issues an order to compel compliance under this subdivision in a case brought by a State's Attorney or the Attorney General, attorneys' fees and costs shall be awarded to the county where the State's Attorney's office is based if the State's Attorney filed the action or to the state if the Attorney General filed the action. The matter shall be heard as soon as possible. In an action involving a request for government data under section 13.03 or 13.04, the court may inspect in camera the government data in dispute, but shall conduct its hearing in public and in a manner that protects the security of data classified as not public. If the court issues an order to compel compliance under this subdivision, the court shall forward a copy of the order to the commissioner of administration.

(b) In determining whether to assess a civil penalty under this subdivision, the court shall consider whether the government entity has substantially complied with general data practices under this chapter, including but not limited to, whether the government entity has:

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- (1) designated a responsible authority under section 13.02, subdivision 16;
 - (2) designated a data practices compliance official under section 13.05, subdivision 13;
 - (3) prepared the public document that names the responsible authority and describes the records and data on individuals that are maintained by the government entity under section 13.05, subdivision 1 ;
 - (4) developed public access procedures under section 13.03, subdivision 2; procedures to guarantee the rights of data subjects under section 13.05, subdivision 8; and procedures to ensure that data on individuals are accurate and complete and to safeguard the data's security under section 13.05, subdivision 5;
 - (5) acted in conformity with an opinion issued under section 13.072 that was sought by a government entity or another person; or
 - (6) provided ongoing training to government entity personnel who respond to requests under this chapter.
- (c) The court shall award reasonable attorney fees to a prevailing plaintiff who has brought an action under this subdivision if the government entity that is the defendant in the action was also the subject of a written opinion issued under section 13.072 and the court finds that the opinion is directly related to the cause of action being litigated and that the government entity did not act in conformity with the opinion.

Subd. 5. Immunity from liability. A government entity or person that releases not public data pursuant to an order under section 13.03, subdivision 6 is immune from civil and criminal liability.

Subd. 6. Immunity from liability; personnel settlement. No cause of action may arise as a result of the release of data contained in a termination or personnel settlement agreement if the data were not public data as defined in section 13.02, at the time the agreement was executed but become public data under a law enacted after execution.

13.09 PENALTIES.

Any person who willfully violates the provisions of this chapter or any rules adopted under this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor. Willful violation of this chapter by any public employee constitutes just cause for suspension without pay or dismissal of the public employee.

13.15 COMPUTER DATA.

Subdivision 1. **Definitions.** As used in this section, the following terms have the meanings given.

(a) **Electronic access data.** "Electronic access data" means data created, collected, or maintained about a person's access to a government entity's computer for the purpose of:

- (1) gaining access to data or information;
- (2) transferring data or information; or
- (3) using government services.

(b) **Cookie.** "Cookie" means any data that a government-operated computer electronically places on the computer of a person who has gained access to a government computer.

Subd. 2. **Classification of data.** Electronic access data are private data on individuals or nonpublic data.

Subd. 3. **Notice; refusal to accept cookie.** (a) A government entity that creates, collects, or maintains electronic access data or uses its computer to install a cookie on a person's computer must inform persons gaining access to the entity's computer of the creation, collection, or maintenance of electronic access data or the entity's use of cookies before requiring the person to provide any data about the person to the government entity. As part of that notice, the government entity must inform the person how the data will be used and disseminated, including the uses and disseminations in subdivision 4.

(b) Notwithstanding a person's refusal to accept a cookie on the person's computer, a government entity must allow the person to gain access to data or information, transfer data or information, or use government services by the government entity's computer.

Subd. 4. **Use of electronic access data.** Electronic access data may be disseminated:

- (1) to the commissioner for the purpose of evaluating electronic government services;
- (2) to another government entity to prevent unlawful intrusions into government electronic systems; or
- (3) as otherwise provided by law.

13.155 INDEPENDENT REGULATORY BRANCH.

Effective January 1, 2010, the legislative branch of the state government shall create an independent regulatory body in the office of the State Attorney General with the power and authority to enforce this chapter.

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(a) All government entities that receive state funds must, by April 1 of each year, file with the Office of the Attorney General a report on the government entity's handling of requests under the chapter during the previous calendar year.

(b) The report must include at least the following: the number of requests received, a description the each type or category of records requested including the number of requests in each type or category of records, the number of requests fully satisfied by the public body, the number of requests fully denied by the government entity and the reasons for the denials.

(c) The report shall be considered "government data" within the meaning of this chapter.

(d) In the event that a public body fails to comply with this Section the Attorney General shall be authorized to order the Comptroller to withhold five percent of the government entity's state funds in the following fiscal year until the report is submitted.

13.156 Role of the Attorney General

(a) The Office of the Attorney General serves the following purposes: offering education and training programs to government officials and entities, the public and the media; answering questions concerning this chapter; working to resolve disputes under this chapter; and working to ensure compliance with the chapter.

(b) In furtherance of those purposes, the Attorney General may, at its discretion, issue opinions regarding a government entity's compliance with the chapter in regard to a specific request for records.

(c) If there is a proceeding under Section 13.08 of this chapter and the Attorney General has previously issued an opinion that the government data sought in the proceeding shall be disclosed but the government entity refuses to comply within a reasonable time, upon motion of the plaintiff the court may consider the government entity's refusal willful and act in accordance with Section 13.08 of this chapter.