

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of a Complaint by

FINAL DECISION

Dayna and Juan Arriola,

Complainants

against

Docket # FIC 2025-0257

Commissioner, State of Connecticut,
Department of Children and Families;
and Department of Children and Families,

Respondents

April 8, 2026

The above-captioned matter was heard as a contested case on September 3, 2025, at which time the complainants and the respondents appeared and presented testimony, exhibits and argument on the complaint.

After consideration of the entire record, the following facts are found and conclusions of law are reached:

1. The respondents are public agencies within the meaning of §1-200(1), G.S.
2. It is found that, by email dated March 24, 2025, the complainants requested that the respondents provide them with access to records related to “Case #CTAG-CTAG.FID3274824, Re: Felix Aguirre, Case: Jill Dumas, which case commenced on or about December 25, 2021, and concluded on July 3, 2024,” including:
 - (a) All costs associated with the Interstate Compact, Resource Family Number 37007427, conducted by the County of San Diego, Jorge Ballesteros, Interstate Compact Social Worker, from July 2022 through November 30, 2022;
 - (b) All costs associated with the psychological evaluation conducted and reported by Suzanne Ciaramella from January through April 2024;
 - (c) All costs associated with the services provided by therapist Trish Strecker from June 30, 2022 through June 8, 2023;
 - (d) All costs associated with the services provided by Annie Edwards of UCFS¹ on September 25, 2024, October 13,

¹ The Commission notes that “UCFS” is the acronym for United Child and Family Services.

2024, and October 16, 2024;

- (e) All costs associated with the services provided by Cheryl Bayuk of UCFS from October 5, 2023 to June 2023;
- (f) All costs associated with the investigation conducted on September 26, 2022 and October 20, 2022, including, but not limited to, the wages paid to investigator Yolanda Napper, and mileage;
- (g) All costs associated with the services of Attorney Barbara Morelli from June 2022 through July 2024;
- (h) The plane flights for Maura Dumas on or about June 3, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, and from Hartford to San Diego on about June 10, 2022, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and admission tickets for the duration of the trip;
- (i) The plane flights for Maura Dumas on or about September 16, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, and on or about September 23, 2022 from Hartford to San Diego, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals and admission tickets, and gift cards to Walmart and any and all other stores for the duration of the trip;
- (j) The plane flights for Maura Dumas on or about February 17, 2023 from San Diego to Hartford, and on or about February 23, 2023, from Hartford to San Diego, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and admission tickets for the duration of the trip;
- (k) The plane flights for Gregory Dumas on or about February 17, 2023 from San Diego to Hartford and on or about February 23, 2023, from Hartford to San Diego, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and admission tickets for the duration of the trip;
- (l) The plane flight for Maura Dumas on July 8, 2023 from San Diego and/or Harford, and the return flight to San Diego, and related travel expenses, including accommodations, rental car, and meals;

- (m) The plane flights for Felix Aguirre on July 28, 2022 from Hartford to San Diego, on August 7, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, on December 15, 2022 from Hartford to San Diego, on December 19, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, on June 21, 2023 from Hartford to San Diego, and on or about July 8, 2023 from San Diego to Newark and/or Hartford, and all related expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, meals, and admission tickets during the trip;
- (n) The plane flights for Michael Winters on or about July 28, 2022 from Hartford or Providence to San Diego, and on August 7, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, and all related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, and meals;
- (o) The plane flights for Caleb Johnson on July 28, 2022 from Hartford to San Diego and the return flight shortly thereafter, and all related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and wages paid for the duration of the trip;
- (p) The plane flights for Sarah Kalka on December 15, 2022 from Hartford to San Diego and on December 19, 2022 from San Diego to Hartford, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and wages paid for the duration of the trip;
- (q) The plane flight[] for Sarah Kalka on June 21, 2023 from Hartford to San Diego, the return flight shortly thereafter, and related travel expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, rental car, meals, and wages paid for the duration of the trip;
- (r) Mileage and wages paid to Sarah Kalka on June 21, 2023 for travel from Hartford to New Haven Train Station and to Bradley Field;
- (s) Travel expenses of Sarah Kalka on or about July 9, 2022, including, but not limited to, plane flights, mileage, and wages paid;
- (t) The wages paid to Caleb Johnson and Sarah Kalka to transport to therapy sessions [sic], from Hartford to Hampton to Danielson, and later Willimantic, and return trips to Hartford, as well as the costs associated with mileage, from June 30, 2022 to June 8, 2023, and wages

paid to Ryan Therriault (July 21, 2022) Melody Cummings Edwards (August 12, 2022), Janet Grindley (September 5, 2022), Kaniesha Thompson (October 6, 2022), Heather Czerwainski (November 28, 2022), A. Stacey (January 27, 2023), and Beatrice Velasquez (February 1 and 16, 2023, March 21 and 29, 2023, and June 21, 2023);

- (u) Costs associated with subpoenas issued for Docket #H12-CP22-019197-A, Re: Felix Aguirre commencing on February 22, 2023 and continuing...April 4, 2023 and April 20, 2023, for: Michael Winters, Gale Lockland, Christopher Dumas, Sarah McDermott and Deidre Goldsmith;
- (v) Provisional fees associated with the testimony of Deidre Goldsmith and Gale Lockland; and
- (w) Costs of equipment and photographs in the development of an album produced by Caleb Johnson and Sarah Kalka from June 2022 through December 2022.

3. By email dated and filed April 15, 2025, the complainants appealed to this Commission, alleging that the respondents violated the Freedom of Information (“FOI”) Act by denying their request for access to the records described in paragraph 2, above.

4. Section 1-200(5), G.S., provides:

“[p]ublic records or files” means any recorded data or information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, received or retained by a public agency, or to which a public agency is entitled to receive a copy by law or contract under section 1-218, whether such data or information be handwritten, typed, tape-recorded, videotaped, printed, photostated, photographed or recorded by any other method.

5. Section 1-210(a), G.S., provides, in relevant part, that:

[e]xcept as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute, all records maintained or kept on file by any public agency, whether or not such records are required by any law or by any rule or regulation, shall be public records and every person shall have the right to . . . (3) receive a copy of such records in accordance with section 1-212.

6. Section 1-212(a), G.S., provides, in relevant part, that “[a]ny person applying in writing shall receive, promptly upon request, a plain, facsimile, electronic or certified copy of

any public record.”

7. It is concluded that the requested records are public records within the meaning of §§1-200(5) and 1-210(a), G.S.

8. At the hearing on this matter, the complainants acknowledged that the respondents had provided them with partial responses to the requests set forth in paragraph 2, above, concerning the cost of certain travel activities. The complainants contended, however, that they are entitled to access all of the records described in paragraph 2, above, because they are the grandparents of the child who was the subject of the underlying investigation and because such records are financial in nature.

9. The respondents contended that the records to which the complainants request access are exempt from disclosure pursuant to the provisions of §§17a-101k and 17a-28(b), G.S.

10. Section 17a-101k, G.S., provides, in relevant part:

- (a) The Commissioner of Children and Families shall maintain a registry of the commissioner’s findings of abuse or neglect of children pursuant to section 17a-101g...The regulations adopted pursuant to subsection (i) of this section shall provide for the use of the registry on a twenty-four-hour daily basis to prevent or discover abuse of children and the establishment of a hearing process for any appeal by a person of the commissioner’s determination that such person is responsible for the abuse or neglect of a child pursuant to subsection (b) of section 17a-101g. The information contained in the registry and any other information relative to child abuse, wherever located, shall be confidential, subject to such statutes and regulations governing their use and access as shall conform to the requirements of federal law or regulations. Any violation of this section or the regulations adopted by the commissioner under this section shall be punishable by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars or imprisonment for not more than one year.

11. Section 17a-28(b), G.S., provides, in relevant part, that “[n]otwithstanding the provisions of [the FOI Act], records maintained by the [Department of Children and Families (“DCF”)] shall be confidential and shall not be disclosed....”

12. Section 17a-28(a)(5), G.S., defines “records maintained by [DCF]” as “information created or obtained in connection with [DCF]’s child protection activities or other activities related to a child while in the care or custody of the department, including information in the registry of reports to be maintained by the commissioner pursuant to section 17a-101k....”

13. In *Groton Police Dep’t v. Freedom of Info. Comm’n*, 104 Conn. App. 150 (2007) (“*Groton*”), the Appellate Court ruled that §17a-101k, G.S., “falls within the opening sentence of

§1-210(a), which provides in relevant part that ‘except as otherwise provided by any federal law or state statute, all records maintained or kept on file by any public agency...shall be public records...,’” and, “because §17a-101k, mandates confidentiality of information regarding child abuse, records of child abuse, wherever located, are exempted from the general rule of disclosure.”

14. In *Groton*, the requester was the parent of an alleged child abuse victim. The Commission concluded that, because of the requester’s status as the parent of the alleged child abuse victim, she had implicitly waived the confidentiality provisions in §17a-101k, G.S., by requesting the subject records under the FOI Act. The Commission thus ordered the records disclosed, with certain redactions.

15. The police department appealed the Commission’s decision to the Superior Court, which sustained the appeal, concluding that the confidentiality requirements in §17a-101k, G.S., may not be implicitly waived. The Appellate Court upheld the Superior Court’s decision. According to the Appellate Court, the requester’s status as a parent of an alleged victim was immaterial to the request for records under the FOI Act, because, by invoking the FOI Act, a requester is not seeking the records as a parent, but as member of the general public. “[A] decision by the commission recognizing waiver would be, in effect, allowing a member of the general public to waive the protection of §17a-101k, which would be a bizarre result.” Citing to the Supreme Court’s decision in *Chief of Police v. Freedom of Info. Comm’n*, 252 Conn. 377, 387 (2000), the *Groton* court reiterated that “[t]he issue of whether a record is disclosable under the [A]ct ‘does not depend in any way on the status or motive of the [requester], because the [A]ct vindicates the public’s right to know, rather than the rights of any individual.’” *Groton*, 104 Conn. App. at 165.

16. It is found that the records described in paragraph 2, above, were created in connection with the respondents’ child protective activities and are part of a minor child’s case file. It is further found that disclosing the costs of child protective activities would confirm the investigative steps that the respondents took as they investigated allegations of child abuse and/or neglect.

17. It is therefore concluded that the records described in paragraph 2, above, are exempt from disclosure pursuant to the provisions of §§17a-28(b) and 17a-101k(a), G.S. It is further concluded that the respondents did not violate the disclosure provisions of §§1-210(a) and 1-212(a), G.S., when they declined to provide the complainants with access to such records.

The following order by the Commission is hereby recommended on the basis of the record concerning the above-captioned complaint:

1. The complaint is dismissed.

Approved by Order of the Freedom of Information Commission at its regular meeting of April 8, 2026.

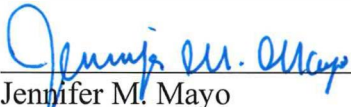

Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission

PURSUANT TO SECTION 4-180(c), G.S., THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NAMES OF EACH PARTY AND THE MOST RECENT MAILING ADDRESS, PROVIDED TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMMISSION, OF THE PARTIES OR THEIR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE.

THE PARTIES TO THIS CONTESTED CASE ARE:

DAYNA AND JUAN ARRIOLA, 218 West Old Route 6, Hampton, CT 06247

COMMISSIONER, STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES; AND STATE OF CONNECTICUT, DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, c/o Attorney Lynn M. Hebert, Connecticut Children & Families, 505 Hudson Street, Hartford, CT 06106



Jennifer M. Mayo
Acting Clerk of the Commission