Below are excerpts from some of key laws related to fair information practices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and references to this body of policy and law from across the US and globally.

**MGL c66A Massachusetts Fair Information Practice Act**

Section 1. As used in this chapter, the following words shall have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:—

“Agency”, any agency of the executive branch of the government, including but not limited to any constitutional or other office, executive office, department, division, bureau, board, commission or committee thereof; or any authority created by the general court to serve a public purpose, having either statewide or local jurisdiction.

“Automated personal data system”, a personal data system in which personal data is stored, in whole or in part, in a computer or in electronically controlled or accessible files.

“Computer accessible”, recorded on magnetic tape, magnetic film, magnetic disc, magnetic drum, punched card, or optically scannable paper or film.

“Criminal justice agency”, an agency at any level of government which performs as its principal function activity relating to (a) the apprehension, prosecution, defense, adjudication, incarceration, or rehabilitation of criminal offenders; or (b) the collection, storage, dissemination, or usage of criminal offender record information.

“Data subject”, an individual to whom personal data refers. This term shall not include corporations, corporate trusts, partnerships, limited partnerships, trusts or other similar entities.

“Holder”, an agency which collects, uses, maintains or disseminates personal data or any person or entity which contracts or has an arrangement with an agency whereby it holds personal data as part or as a result of performing a governmental or public function or purpose. A holder which is not an agency is a holder, and subject to the provisions of this chapter, only with respect to personal data so held under contract or arrangement with an agency.

“Manual personal data system”, a personal data system which is not an automated or other electronically accessible or controlled personal data system.

“Personal data”, any information concerning an individual which, because of name, identifying number, mark or description can be readily associated with a particular individual; provided, however, that such information is not contained in a public record, as defined in clause Twenty-sixth of section seven of chapter four and shall not include intelligence information, evaluative information or criminal offender record information as defined in section one hundred and sixty-seven of chapter six.

“Personal data system”, a system of records containing personal data, which system is organized such that the data are retrievable by use of the identity of the data subject.

Section 2. Every holder maintaining personal data shall:—

(a) identify one individual immediately responsible for the personal data system who shall insure that the requirements of this chapter for preventing access to or dissemination of personal data are followed;

(b) inform each of its employees having any responsibility or function in the design, development, operation, or maintenance of the personal data system, or the use of any personal data contained therein, of each safeguard required by this chapter, of each rule and regulation promulgated pursuant to section three which pertains to the operation of the personal data system, and of the civil remedies described in section three B of chapter two hundred and fourteen available to individuals whose rights under chapter sixty-six A are allegedly violated;

(c) not allow any other agency or individual not employed by the holder to have access to personal data unless such access is authorized by statute or regulations which are consistent with the purposes of this chapter or is approved by the data subject whose personal data are sought if the data subject is entitled to access under clause (i). Medical or psychiatric data may be made available to a physician treating a data subject upon the request of said physician, if a medical or psychiatric emergency arises which precludes the data subject’s giving approval for the release of such data, but the data subject shall be given notice of such access upon termination of the emergency. A holder shall provide lists of names and addresses of applicants for professional licenses and lists of professional licensees to associations or educational organizations recognized by the appropriate professional licensing or examination board. A holder shall comply with a data subject’s request to disseminate his data to a third person if practicable and upon payment, if necessary, of a reasonable fee; provided, however, that nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit disclosure to or access by the bureau of special investigations to the records or files of the department of transitional assistance for the purposes of fraud detection and control;

(d) take reasonable precautions to protect personal data from dangers of fire, identity theft, theft, flood, natural disaster, or other physical threat;

(e) comply with the notice requirements set forth in section sixty-three of chapter thirty;

(f) in the case of data held in automated personal data systems, and to the extent feasible with data held in manual personal data systems, maintain a complete and accurate record of every access to and every use of any personal data by persons or organizations outside of or other than the holder of the data, including the identity of all such persons and organizations which have gained access to the personal data and their intended use of such data and the holder need not record any such access of its employees acting within their official duties;

(g) to the extent that such material is maintained pursuant to this section, make available to a data subject upon his request in a form comprehensible to him, a list of the uses made of his personal data, including the identity of all persons and organizations which have gained access to the data;

(h) maintain personal data with such accuracy, completeness, timeliness, pertinence and relevance as is necessary to assure fair determination of a data subject’s qualifications, character, rights, opportunities, or benefits when such determinations are based upon such data;

(i) inform in writing an individual, upon his request, whether he is a data subject, and if so, make such data fully available to him or his authorized representative, upon his request, in a form comprehensible to him, unless doing so is prohibited by this clause or any other statute. A holder may withhold from a data subject for the period hereinafter set forth, information which is currently the subject of an investigation and the disclosure of which would probably so prejudice the possibility of effective law enforcement that such disclosure would not be in the public interest, but this sentence is not intended in any way to derogate from any right or power of access the data subject might have under administrative or judicial discovery procedures. Such information may be withheld for the time it takes for the holder to complete its investigation and commence an administrative or judicial proceeding on its basis, or one year from the commencement of the investigation or whichever occurs first. In making any disclosure of information to a data subject pursuant to this chapter the holder may remove personal identifiers relating to a third person, except where such third person is an officer or employee of government acting as such and the data subject is not. No holder shall rely on any exception contained in clause Twenty-sixth of section seven of chapter four to withhold from any data subject personal data otherwise accessible to him under this chapter;

(j) establish procedures that (1) allow each data subject or his duly authorized representative to contest the accuracy, completeness, pertinence, timeliness, relevance or dissemination of his personal data or the denial of access to such data maintained in the personal data system and (2) permit personal data to be corrected or amended when the data subject or his duly authorized representative so requests and there is no disagreement concerning the change to be made or, when there is disagreement with the data subject as to whether a change should be made, assure that the data subject’s claim is noted and included as part of the data subject’s personal data and included in any subsequent disclosure or dissemination of the disputed data;

(k) maintain procedures to ensure that no personal data are made available in response to a demand for data made by means of compulsory legal process, unless the data subject has been notified of such demand in reasonable time that he may seek to have the process quashed;

(l) not collect or maintain more personal data than are reasonably necessary for the performance of the holder’s statutory functions.

Section 3. The secretary of each executive office shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this chapter which shall be applicable to all agencies, departments, boards, commissions, authorities, and instrumentalities within each of said executive offices subject to the approval of the commissioner of administration. The department of housing and community development shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this chapter which shall be applicable to local housing and redevelopment authorities of the cities and towns. Any agency not within any such executive office shall be subject to the regulations of the commissioner of administration. The attorney general, the state secretary, the state treasurer and the state auditor shall adopt applicable regulations for their respective departments.

[NOTE: The superb history of the Fair Information Practices around the US and around the world can be found at: [http://bobgellman.com/rg-docs/rg-FIPShistory.pdf](http://bobgellman.com/rg-docs/rg-FIPShistory.pdf" \t "_blank)]

[NOTE: An example of how to directly reflect the FIPS in rules governing an information system can be found at: <http://civics.com/pd-tf-sysrules/>]

**MGL c.4 Section 7 Clause 26: Definitions of Public Records and Exceptions**

Twenty-sixth, “Public records” shall mean all books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any officer or employee of any agency, executive office, department, board, commission, bureau, division or authority of the commonwealth, or of any political subdivision thereof, or of any authority established by the general court to serve a public purpose, unless such materials or data fall within the following exemptions in that they are:

(a) specifically or by necessary implication exempted from disclosure by statute;

(b) related solely to internal personnel rules and practices of the government unit, provided however, that such records shall be withheld only to the extent that proper performance of necessary governmental functions requires such withholding;

(c) personnel and medical files or information; also any other materials or data relating to a specifically named individual, the disclosure of which may constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(d) inter-agency or intra-agency memoranda or letters relating to policy positions being developed by the agency; but this subclause shall not apply to reasonably completed factual studies or reports on which the development of such policy positions has been or may be based;

(e) notebooks and other materials prepared by an employee of the commonwealth which are personal to him and not maintained as part of the files of the governmental unit;

(f) investigatory materials necessarily compiled out of the public view by law enforcement or other investigatory officials the disclosure of which materials would probably so prejudice the possibility of effective law enforcement that such disclosure would not be in the public interest;

(g) trade secrets or commercial or financial information voluntarily provided to an agency for use in developing governmental policy and upon a promise of confidentiality; but this subclause shall not apply to information submitted as required by law or as a condition of receiving a governmental contract or other benefit;

(h) proposals and bids to enter into any contract or agreement until the time for the opening of bids in the case of proposals or bids to be opened publicly, and until the time for the receipt of bids or proposals has expired in all other cases; and inter-agency or intra-agency communications made in connection with an evaluation process for reviewing bids or proposals, prior to a decision to enter into negotiations with or to award a contract to, a particular person;

(i) appraisals of real property acquired or to be acquired until (1) a final agreement is entered into; or (2) any litigation relative to such appraisal has been terminated; or (3) the time within which to commence such litigation has expired;

(j) the names and addresses of any persons contained in, or referred to in, any applications for any licenses to carry or possess firearms issued pursuant to chapter one hundred and forty or any firearms identification cards issued pursuant to said chapter one hundred and forty and the names and addresses on sales or transfers of any firearms, rifles, shotguns, or machine guns or ammunition therefor, as defined in said chapter one hundred and forty and the names and addresses on said licenses or cards;

*[There is no subclause (k).]*

(l) questions and answers, scoring keys and sheets and other materials used to develop, administer or score a test, examination or assessment instrument; provided, however, that such materials are intended to be used for another test, examination or assessment instrument;

(m) contracts for hospital or related health care services between (i) any hospital, clinic or other health care facility operated by a unit of state, county or municipal government and (ii) a health maintenance organization arrangement approved under chapter one hundred and seventy-six I, a nonprofit hospital service corporation or medical service corporation organized pursuant to chapter one hundred and seventy-six A and chapter one hundred and seventy-six B, respectively, a health insurance corporation licensed under chapter one hundred and seventy-five or any legal entity that is self insured and provides health care benefits to its employees.

(n) records, including, but not limited to, blueprints, plans, policies, procedures and schematic drawings, which relate to internal layout and structural elements, security measures, emergency preparedness, threat or vulnerability assessments, or any other records relating to the security or safety of persons or buildings, structures, facilities, utilities, transportation or other infrastructure located within the commonwealth, the disclosure of which, in the reasonable judgment of the record custodian, subject to review by the supervisor of public records under subsection (b) of section 10 of chapter 66, is likely to jeopardize public safety.

(o) the home address and home telephone number of an employee of the judicial branch, an unelected employee of the general court, an agency, executive office, department, board, commission, bureau, division or authority of the commonwealth, or of a political subdivision thereof or of an authority established by the general court to serve a public purpose, in the custody of a government agency which maintains records identifying persons as falling within those categories; provided that the information may be disclosed to an employee organization under chapter 150E, a nonprofit organization for retired public employees under chapter 180, or a criminal justice agency as defined in section 167 of chapter 6.

(p) the name, home address and home telephone number of a family member of a commonwealth employee, contained in a record in the custody of a government agency which maintains records identifying persons as falling within the categories listed in subclause (o).

(q) Adoption contact information and indices therefore of the adoption contact registry established by section 31 of chapter 46.

(r) Information and records acquired under chapter 18C by the office of the child advocate.

(s) trade secrets or confidential, competitively-sensitive or other proprietary information provided in the course of activities conducted by a governmental body as an energy supplier under a license granted by the department of public utilities pursuant to section 1F of chapter 164, in the course of activities conducted as a municipal aggregator under section 134 of said chapter 164 or in the course of activities conducted by a cooperative consisting of governmental entities organized pursuant to section 136 of said chapter 164, when such governmental body, municipal aggregator or cooperative determines that such disclosure will adversely affect its ability to conduct business in relation to other entities making, selling or distributing electric power and energy; provided, however, that this subclause shall not exempt a public entity from disclosure required of a private entity so licensed.

Any person denied access to public records may pursue the remedy provided for in section ten of chapter sixty-six.

**Public records rules specific to municipalities**

MGL c66 Section 17. Except as otherwise provided by law, all public records shall be kept in the custody of the person having the custody of similar records in the county, city or town to which they originally belonged, and if not in his custody shall be demanded by him of the person having possession thereof, and shall forthwith be delivered by such person to him. Whoever refuses or neglects to perform any duty required of him by this section shall be punished by a fine of not more than twenty dollars.

MGL c66 Section 5. County commissioners, city councils and selectmen may cause copies of records of counties, cities or towns, of town proprietaries, of proprietors of plantations, townships or common lands, relative to land situated in their county, city or town or of easements relating thereto, to be made for their county, city or town, whether such records are within or without the commonwealth, and such records within the commonwealth may be delivered by their custodians to any county, city or town for such copying. City councils and selectmen may also cause copies to be made of the records of births, baptisms, marriages and deaths kept by a church or parish in their city or town.

**MGL c.93H SECURITY BREACHES and 201 CMR 17**

[**http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXV/Chapter93H**](http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXV/Chapter93H)

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/201\_CMR\_17.00**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/201_CMR_17.00)