



## **F07-16-MS                      Student Seeks Information on Campus Security Helpers**

A student attending night classes made frequent use of a “safe walk” program that provided a campus security escort to the parking lot or bus stop. Campus security staff also helped her when some of her belongings were stolen. Four years later, the student asked the college to give her copies of the records documenting the assistance provided to her.

The college later responded that campus security had searched for the records the student had requested but had found none. She was told that at the time of her dealings with campus security there had been no consistent procedure for creating such records.

The student complained to us that the college had not conducted an adequate search, as she recalled some of the security officers making notes in her presence. The college provided a more detailed explanation that campus security had searched for records in their 2002 files, their current data base and a collection of slips of paper relating to safe walks. They had also contacted some retired security officers who recalled having assisted the student but had not retained any records themselves.

Section 6(1) of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* requires public bodies, including universities and colleges, to make every reasonable effort to assist applicants. This creates an obligation to conduct an adequate search for requested records. Our office’s decisions confirm that, to be considered adequate, a search must be thorough and comprehensive and that a public body must make a reasonable effort to explore all avenues. It is not a standard of perfection but requires diligence.

We concluded that, under the circumstances, the college had conducted an adequate search and, moreover, had no obligation to keep records of the nature sought for such a lengthy period of time. However, we did recommend that campus security implement a records management policy including provision for retention and destruction.