



Office of the Attorney General

State of Texas

September 17, 1992

DAN MORALES  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

Mr. Mike Driscoll  
County Attorney  
Harris County  
1001 Preston, Suite 634  
Houston, Texas 77002-1891

OR92-552

Dear Mr. Driscoll:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Texas Open Records Act, article 6252-17a, V.T.C.S. Your request was assigned ID# 17348.

The Harris County received an open records request for certain records that you contend may be withheld from the public pursuant to section 3(a)(3) of the Open Records Act. To secure the protection of section 3(a)(3), a governmental body must demonstrate that requested information "relates" to a pending or reasonably anticipated judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding. Open Records Decision No. 551 (1990). In this instance you have made the requisite showing that the requested information relates to pending litigation for purposes of section 3(a)(3); the requested records may therefore be withheld.<sup>1</sup>

In reaching this conclusion, however, we assume that the opposing party to the litigation has not previously had access to the records at issue; absent special circumstances, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation, e.g., through discovery or otherwise, no section 3(a)(3) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision Nos. 349, 320 (1982). If the opposing parties in the litigation have seen or had access to any of the information in these records, there would be no justification for now withholding that information from the requestor pursuant to section 3(a)(3).

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<sup>1</sup>This is so even though the requestor in this case is seeking access to the records in his own personnel file. Section 3(a)(2) of the Open Records Act does not give an employee a special right of access that overrides other exceptions. Open Records Decision No. 288 (1981).

We also note that because section 3(a)(3) protects only information that is relevant to the litigation, this section is inapplicable to documents that the presiding judge has ruled undiscoverable because they lack relevance to the lawsuit. Finally, the applicability of section 3(a)(3) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

Because case law and prior published open records decisions resolve your request, we are resolving this matter with this informal letter ruling rather than with a published open records decision. If you have questions about this ruling, please refer to OR92-552.

Yours very truly,



Kay H. Guajardo  
Assistant Attorney General  
Opinion Committee

KHG/RWP/lmm

Ref.: ID# 17348

Enclosures: Submitted documents

cc: Mr. Elster Paul Dessell, Jr.  
13116 Advance Drive  
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(w/o enclosures)