OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL · STATE OF TEXAS
JOHN CORNYN

December 14, 2001

Mr. James L. Hall
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342

OR2001-5842

Dear Mr. Hall:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 156152.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a written request for records pertaining to an inmate's grievances regarding access to the law library at the Darrington Unit and "records kept concerning prisoner law library scheduling and attendance[.]" You have submitted to this office the documents responsive to the request, and contend that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 and 552.134 of the Government Code.

Section 552.134(a) of the Government Code provides:

> Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Section 552.029 of the Government Code provides:

> Notwithstanding Section 508.313 or [552.134], the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is subject to required disclosure under Section 552.021:

> (1) the inmate's name, identification number, age, birthplace, physical description, or general state of health or the nature of an injury to or critical illness suffered by the inmate;
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> (2) the inmate's assigned unit or the date on which the unit received the inmate, unless disclosure of the information would violate federal law relating to the confidentiality of substance abuse treatment;
>
> (3) the offense for which the inmate was convicted or the judgment and sentence for that offense;
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> (4) the county and court in which the inmate was convicted;
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> (5) the inmate's earliest or latest possible release dates;
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> (6) the inmate's parole date or earliest possible parole date;
>
> (7) any prior confinement of the inmate by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or its predecessor; or
>
> (8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Section 552.134 is explicitly made subject to section 552.029. Section 552.029 does not make public any of the information at issue here. We therefore conclude that the department must withhold the requested information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.134 of the Government Code.[1]

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days.

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[1]Because we resolve your request under section 552.134, we need not address the applicability of section 552.108 of the Government Code.

Id. § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

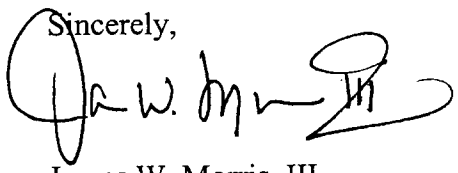
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Tex. Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/RWP/sdk

Ref: ID# 156152

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Ada Marie Cooper
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(w/o enclosures)