



OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

January 22, 2003

Lieutenant Javier Gonzalez
Records Division
Pharr Police Department
202 East Clark
Pharr, Texas 78577

OR2003-0434

Dear Lt. Gonzalez:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 175315.

The Pharr Police Department (the "department") received a request for information relating to case numbers 02-17498 and 02-17499. You claim that information relating to case number 02-17498 is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the information you submitted. We assume that you have released any information relating to the other case number that existed on the date of the department's receipt of this request. If not, then you must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000). We note that chapter 552 of the Government Code does not require the department to release information that did not exist when it received this request or to create responsive information. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 452 at 3 (1986), 362 at 2 (1983).

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This exception encompasses information that another statute makes confidential.¹ Section 261.201 of the Family Code provides in part:

¹Unlike other exceptions to disclosure, this office will raise section 552.101 on behalf of a governmental body, as chapter 552 of the Government Code prescribes criminal penalties for the release of confidential information. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.007, .352; Open Records Decision No. 325 (1982).

(a) The following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with this code and applicable federal or state law or under rules adopted by an investigating agency:

- (1) a report of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect made under this chapter and the identity of the person making the report; and
- (2) except as otherwise provided in this section, the files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We find that the submitted information consists of files, reports, records, communications, and working papers used or developed in an investigation made under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See also* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute). You do not inform this office that the department has adopted any rule that would allow the release of the submitted information in this instance. We therefore assume that no such rule exists. Given that assumption, we conclude that the submitted information is confidential in its entirety under section 261.201 of the Family Code and thus must be withheld from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law. As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your claim under section 552.108.

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. *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

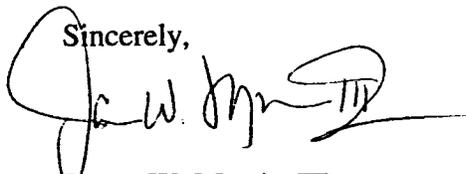
will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure 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); *Texas Department of Public 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. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Morris, III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "M".

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

JWM/sdk

Ref: ID# 175315

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Joanna L. Cuellar
1014 East Juarez
Pharr, Texas 78577
(w/o enclosures)