ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 22, 2003

Ms. Zindia T. Thomas
Assistant Attorney General
Assistant Public Information Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

OR2003-7577

Dear Ms. Thomas:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 190287.

The Office of the Attorney General (the "OAG") received a request for information related to a specific crime victim's compensation claim. You state that the only responsive information at issue is an offense report that was provided to the Crime Victims' Compensation Division of the OAG by the Austin Police Department. *See* Crim. Proc. Code art. 56.38 (stating that, upon request, law enforcement entity must release all reports to OAG for purpose of determining crime victim's compensation claim). You claim that the submitted offense report is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with several state statutes. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the information at issue.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. You contend that the submitted report is confidential under section 51.14 of the Family Code. Prior to its repeal by the Seventy-fourth Legislature, section 51.14(d) of the Family Code provided for the confidentiality of juvenile law enforcement records. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 394 at 4-5 (1983) (applying former Fam. Code § 51.14(d) to "police blotter" and related information), 181 (1977) (concluding that former Fam. Code § 51.14(d) excepts police

reports which identify juvenile suspects or furnish basis for their identification). Law enforcement records pertaining to juvenile conduct occurring before January 1, 1996 are governed by former section 51.14(d), which was continued in effect for that purpose. Act of May 27, 1995, 74th Leg., R.S., ch. 262, § 100, 1995 Tex. Gen. Laws 2517, 2591. The submitted report involves a juvenile offender and concerns conduct that occurred before January 1, 1996. Since none of the exceptions to former section 51.14(d) apply in this instance, we conclude that the OAG must withhold the submitted report from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with former section 51.14(d) of the Family Code.

Because we are able to make a determination under section 51.14(d), we need not address your additional argument against disclosure. 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).

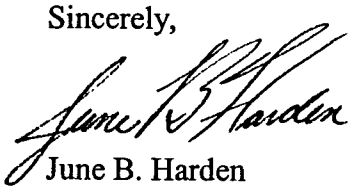
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following 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 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. 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,



June B. Harden
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JBH/seg

Ref: ID# 190287

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Amy Grant
7616 Medano
El Paso, Texas 79912-1256
(w/o enclosures)