



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 11, 2004

Ms. Mia Settle-Vinson  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Houston - Legal Department  
P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2004-8613

Dear Ms. Settle-Vinson:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 213510.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for a specific incident report. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision" and encompasses information made confidential by other statutes. You assert that the submitted information is confidential under section 773.091 of the Health and Safety Code, which addresses certain records regarding emergency medical services and provides in pertinent part:

(b) Records of the identity, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by emergency medical services personnel or by a physician providing medical supervision that are created by the emergency medical services personnel or physician or maintained by an emergency medical services provider are confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

Health & Safety § 773.091(b). Subsection 773.091(g) provides, however, that this confidentiality “does not extend to information regarding the presence, nature of injury or illness, age, sex, occupation, and city of residence of a patient who is receiving emergency medical services.” *Id.* § 773.091(g).

The submitted information consists of an Emergency Medical Services (“EMS”) report of the identity, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by EMS personnel. We note that none of the exceptions to confidentiality listed in section 773.092 appear to apply in this instance. *See* Health & Safety Code § 773.093 (listing elements of consent for release of EMS records). Thus, we agree that the submitted EMS report is generally made confidential by section 773.091. However, as noted above, information regarding the presence, nature of injury or illness, age, sex, occupation, and city of residence of the patient receiving emergency medical services is not confidential under section 773.091 and may not be withheld on that basis. Because you claim no other exception for such information and it is not otherwise confidential by law, the city must release the listed information from the submitted EMS report. The remaining information in the submitted EMS report must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 773.091 of the Health and Safety Code.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup>Because we are able to resolve this matter under section 552.101, we do not address your section 552.130 claim.

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,



L. Joseph James  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

LJJ/seg

Ref: ID# 213510

Enc. Submitted documents

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(w/o enclosures)