



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

January 27, 2005

Mr. Don Hatcher  
Chief of Police  
Leander Police Department  
P. O. Box 319  
Leander, Texas 78646-0319

OR2005-00779

Dear Mr. Hatcher:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 217624

The Leander Police Department (the "department") received a request for two specific reports. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.<sup>1</sup>

Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by section 58.007 of the Family Code. Law enforcement records involving juvenile offenders and relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. The relevant language of section 58.007(c) reads as follows:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

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<sup>1</sup>We note that you have submitted a third report to this office. Because this report is not responsive to the request, we do not address it in this ruling.

- (1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;
- (2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and
- (3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapter B.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). For purposes of section 58.007, "child" means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2). However, information relating to juvenile crime victims is not made confidential by section 58.007. *See* Open Records Decision No. 628 at 6 (1994) (predecessor statute). Report numbers 302617 and 302625 do not involve juvenile suspects. Therefore, section 58.007 does not apply to report numbers 302617 and 302625, and they cannot be withheld on that basis.

You also claim that section 261.201(a) of the Family Code applies to these reports. Section 261.201, also encompassed by section 552.101, provides as follows:

(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, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 26.201(a). Because the reports at issue consist of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in investigations under chapter 261, the information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information; therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, reports numbers 302617 and 302625 are confidential in their entirety pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute). Accordingly, the department must withhold these reports from

disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.<sup>2</sup> Because our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments.

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

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<sup>2</sup>We note, however, that if the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has created a file on this alleged abuse, the child's parent(s) may have the statutory right to review that file. See Fam. Code § 261.201(g); Act of June 2, 2003, 78th Leg., R.S., ch. 198, § 1.27, 2003 Tex. Gen. Law 611, 641 ("A reference in law to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Service means the Department of Family and Protective Services.").

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 'Jaslyn N. Thompson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jaslyn N. Thompson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JNT/krl

Ref: ID# 216724

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Cassie Holman  
Hill Country News  
103 Woods Lane  
Cedar Park, Texas 78613  
(w/o enclosures)