



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 24, 2005

Mr. Bob D. Odom  
Assistant District Attorney  
27<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Texas  
Bell County  
P.O. Box 540  
Belton, Texas 76513-0540

OR2005-07662

Dear Mr. Odom:

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# 230954.

The Bell County District Attorney (the "district attorney") received a request for information relating to a particular incident. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.108, 552.111, 552.130 and 552.352 of the Government Code and section 261.201 of the Family 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. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code 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, 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. You indicate, and the documents reflect, that the responsive information at issue was used or developed in an investigation of an alleged assault resulting in injury to a child. Based on your representation and our review, we find that the submitted information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the district attorney has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute). Accordingly, the district attorney must withhold the responsive information from disclosure in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.<sup>1</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments 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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the

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<sup>1</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. Sess. Law Serv. 611, 641 ("A reference in law to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Service means the Department of Family and Protective Services.").

Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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,



James Forrest  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JF/jev

Ref: ID# 230954

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Ollie Urquehart  
Arkansas Department of Correction  
P.O. Box 6209  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71611  
(w/o enclosures)