



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

September 15, 2005

Mr. Brad Norton  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Austin  
P.O. Box 1546  
Austin, Texas 78767-1546

OR2005-08433

Dear Mr. Norton:

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# 232292.

The Austin Police Department (the "department") received a request for five categories of information related to the department's response to calls or complaints concerning any of the properties within the 2500 block and the 2900 block of West Anderson Lane and between 7901 and 7905 Rockwood Lane for a specified time period. You state that the department will make some information available to the requestor. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of the requested information.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

We note that portions of the submitted information that you seek to withhold under section 552.108 are confidential under section 552.101 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information that another statute makes confidential. Section 261.201 of the Family Code provides in part:

(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 [the Family 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Because the submitted information we have marked consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code, the information falls within the scope of section 261.201. You do not indicate that the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. We therefore assume that no such rule exists. Given that assumption, we conclude that the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code as information made confidential by law. *See also* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (addressing predecessor statute).<sup>3</sup>

Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007 of the Family Code. The relevant language of section 58.007(c) reads as follows:

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<sup>2</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.101 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

<sup>3</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not consider the applicability of section 552.108 to this information.

(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:

- (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.

Some of the information at issue involves juvenile conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. It does not appear that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply; therefore, the information we have marked is confidential pursuant to section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. You must withhold the marked information from disclosure in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code.<sup>4</sup>

We will now address the applicability of section 552.108 to the remaining information. Section 552.108 provides the following:

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

- (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime;
- (2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1)-(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that some of the submitted information

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<sup>4</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not consider the applicability of section 552.108 to this information.

pertains to ongoing criminal investigations or prosecutions, and you have explained how release of this information would interfere in some way with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. Thus, you have met your burden under section 552.108(a)(1) for the information that you have marked accordingly. You also state that some of the requested information pertains to criminal investigations that have concluded in a final result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Thus, you have met your burden under section 552.108(a)(2) for the information you have marked as subject to this provision. Therefore, we agree that section 552.108 is applicable to the remaining information.

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, with the exception of the basic front page offense and arrest information, you may withhold the remaining information from disclosure based on section 552.108. We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of the remaining information at issue that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov't Code § 552.007.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with sections 261.201 and 58.007 of the Family Code. With the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108 of the Government Code.

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

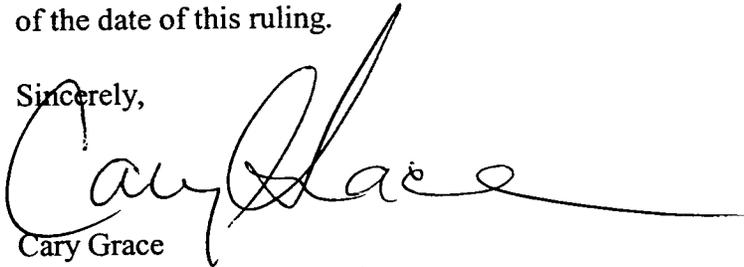
Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Cary Grace  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

ECG/sdk

Ref: ID# 232292

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Mark A. Hopkins  
Attorney at Law  
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(w/o enclosures)