



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 7, 2007

Mr. Oscar J. Garcia
Lieutenant Crime Records Bureau
Police Department, City of McAllen
P.O. Box 220
McAllen, Texas 78501

OR2007-05350

Dear Mr. Garcia:

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# 277797.

The McAllen Police Department (the "department") received a request for any police reports filed against a named individual since January 2005, including a specified report filed in March 2005. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the information at issue relates to a pending criminal prosecution. Based upon this representation, we conclude that the release of this information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to this information.

We note, however, that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrest, an arrested person, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. See Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Basic information includes the identity and description of the complainant. However, information tending to identify a sexual assault victim is protected by common-law privacy and must be withheld pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code. See *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976); ORD Nos. 393, 339. The submitted information pertains to a sexual assault. Thus, the department must withhold the victim's identifying information from the submitted information.

In summary, the department must withhold the complainant's identifying information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. With the exception of the remaining basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the remaining submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) 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,



Jaime L. Flores
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLF/jb

Ref: ID# 277797

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Becky Medellin
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(w/o enclosures)