ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 13, 2008

Mr. Charles H. Weir
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P. O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2008-08135

Dear Mr. Weir:

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# 312662.

The San Antonio Police Department (the "department") received a request for report number 80187205. You claim that the requested 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 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."[1] Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected 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, and working papers used or developed in

[1]The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception, such as section 552.101, on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

> an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Because the requested documents relate to an investigation of child endangerment, the documents are within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.001(4)(b)(I) (definition of neglect includes placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child). 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, the requested documents are confidential 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 documents from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code as information made confidential by law.[2] As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your argument 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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, 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).

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[2]We note that the requestor, as a parent of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, may have a right of access to certain abuse and neglect records maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Section 261.201(g) of the Family Code provides that DFPS, upon request and subject to its own rules:

> shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section if DFPS has edited the information to protect the confidentiality of the identity of the person who made the report and any other person whose life or safety may be endangered by the disclosure.

Fam. Code § 261.201(g).

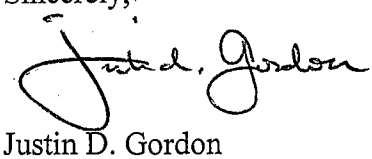
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 challenge 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,



Justin D. Gordon
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JDG/eeg

Ref: ID# 312662

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Christopher D. Pope
1601 MLK Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78203
(w/o enclosures)