ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 2, 2008

Mr. Joe Torres, III
Attorney at Law
216 Texas Boulevard, Suite 2
Alice, Texas 78332

OR2008-08950

Dear Mr. Torres:

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# 314982.

The Alice Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for all reports pertaining to the requestor's client from April 22, 2008 to the date of the request. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

> 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 § 261.201(a). We note that the submitted information constitutes files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation of child abuse or neglect under chapter 261; therefore, this information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of section 261.201 as "person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes"), 261.001(1)(defining "abuse" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). You do not inform us that the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. We therefore assume no such rule exists. Given this assumption, we conclude that the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code, and that the department must withhold it in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).[1]

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). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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

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[1] As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

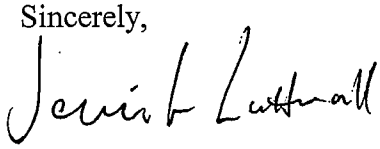
requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

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,



Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/eeg

Ref: ID# 314982

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Melissa Madrigal
102 North Staples Street
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401
(w/o enclosures)