



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 10, 2008

Ms. Katie Lentz
Open Records
Williamson County Sheriff's Office
508 South Rock Street
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2008-12469

Dear Ms. Lentz:

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# 325772.

The Williamson County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for incident report number C07-08-2296. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You raise section 552.101 of the Government Code, which 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 the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a person of ordinary sensibilities, and of no legitimate public interest. See *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The type of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683. In addition, this office has found that some medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses is protected under common-law privacy. Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical

handicaps). Upon review, we find that you have failed to demonstrate that the information you have marked is intimate and embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Therefore, none of this information is protected by common-law privacy, and the sheriff may not withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis. As you raise no other exception to disclosure of this information, it must be released to the requestor.

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).

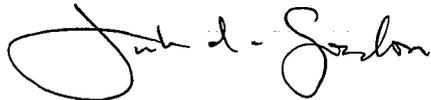
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin D. Gordon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "G".

Justin D. Gordon
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JDG/eeg

Ref: ID# 325772

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Alex Larotta
1221 South MoPac Expressway, Suite 360
Austin, Texas 78746
(w/o enclosures)