ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 3, 2008

Ms. Yvette Aguilar
Assistant City Attorney
City of Corpus Christi Legal Department
P.O. Box 9277
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469-3239

OR2008-13580

Dear Ms. Aguilar:

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# 323504.

The City of Corpus Christi (the "city") received a request for billing and medical records pertaining to a named individual. You state that you have provided some information to the requestor. 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.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public 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 other statutes make confidential. Section 773.091 of the Health and Safety Code provides in relevant part:

> (b) Records of the identity, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by emergency medical services personnel or by a physician providing medical supervision that are created by the emergency medical services personnel or physician or maintained by an emergency medical services provider are confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.
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> . . .
>
> (g) The privilege of confidentiality under this section does not extend to information regarding the presence, nature of injury or illness, age, sex,

> occupation, and city of residence of a patient who is receiving emergency medical services.

Health & Safety Code § 773.091(b), (g). You inform us that the submitted information was created by emergency medical services ("EMS") personnel. Based on your representation, we conclude that the submitted information is confidential under section 773.091. We note, however, that records that are confidential under section 773.091 may be disclosed to "any person who bears a written consent of the patient or other persons authorized to act on the patient's behalf for the release of confidential information." *Id.* §§ 773.092 (e)(4), .093. Section 773.093 provides that a consent for release of EMS records must specify: (1) the information or records to be covered by the release; (2) the reasons or purpose for the release; and (3) the person to whom the information is to be released. You state that the city has not received adequate consent for release of this information. Therefore, the city must withhold the submitted EMS records pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 773.091 of the Health and Safety Code, except as specified by section 773.091(g). However, the city must release these EMS records on receipt of proper consent under section 773.093(a). *See id.* §§ 773.092 , .093.

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).

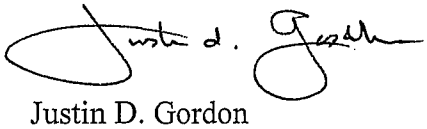
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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 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# 323504

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Tally Perez
Brown Sims, P.C., 10th Floor
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(w/o enclosures)