



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 27, 2009

Mr. Daniel Bradford
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767

OR2009-02580

Dear Mr. Bradford:

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# 336076.

The Travis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for information pertaining to two named individuals. You claim 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 552.101 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 common law privacy and excepts from disclosure private facts about an individual. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. 1976), *cert. denied*, 430 U.S. 931 (1977). Information is excepted from required public disclosure by a common law right of privacy if the information (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) the information is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Id.*

In Open Records Decision No. 393 (1983), this office concluded that, generally, only that information which either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or other sex-related offense may be withheld under common law privacy; however, because the identifying information was inextricably intertwined with other releasable information, the

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

governmental body was required to withhold the entire report. Open Records Decision No. 393 at 2 (1983); *see* Open Records Decision No. 339 (1982); *see also Morales v. Ellen*, 840 S.W.2d 519 (Tex. App.—El Paso 1992, writ denied) (identity of witnesses to and victims of sexual harassment was highly intimate or embarrassing information and public did not have a legitimate interest in such information); Open Records Decision No. 440 (1986) (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld). The requestor in this case knows the identity of the alleged victim. We believe, in this instance, withholding only identifying information from the requestor would not preserve the alleged victim's common law right to privacy. We conclude, therefore, the sheriff must withhold all of the submitted information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.²

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Olivia A. Maceo
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

OM/eeg

Ref: ID# 336076

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.