



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

February 23, 2010

Mr. Mark G. Daniel  
For City of Watauga  
Evans, Daniel, Moore & Evans  
115 West Second Street, Suite 202  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2010-02671

Dear Mr. Daniel:

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#370938 (Watauga Public Information Request Number 09-656).

The Watauga Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for a specified incident report. You state you have released some of the information to the requestor. You claim that 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 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."<sup>1</sup> Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent

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<sup>1</sup>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).

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, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the department or the Texas Youth Commission, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law; and

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l). The submitted report was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See* Fam. Code § 261.001 (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section 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). We find the submitted report is generally confidential under section 261.201 of the Family Code. However, the requestor is the parent of the child victim listed in the report, and the parent is not alleged to have committed the suspected abuse. In this instance, the department may not use section 261.201(a) to withhold this report from this requestor. *Id.* § 261.201(k).

Section 261.201(1)(2), however, states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(1)(2). We note the information at issue is also subject to section 58.007 of the Family Code. Accordingly, we will consider the applicability of that section to the information at issue.

Section 552.101 also encompasses section 58.007 of the Family Code, which provides in part:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

(1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;

(2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and

~~(3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapters B, D, and E.~~

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). Section 58.007(c) is applicable to records of juvenile delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision that occurred on or after September 1, 1997. The submitted report involves juvenile delinquent conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. *See* Fam. Code § 51.03(a) (defining “delinquent conduct” for purposes of Fam. Code § 58.007). You do not inform us, and it does not appear, that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply to the information in this report. Therefore, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.<sup>2</sup>

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.

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<sup>2</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your argument against disclosure.

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](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, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Kate Hartfield  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KH/dls

Ref: ID# 370938

Enc. Submitted documents

c: ~~Requestor~~  
(w/o enclosures)