



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 1, 2010

Lieutenant William T. Edmundson
Records Division
Pharr Police Department
1900 South Cage
Pharr, Texas 78577-6751

OR2010-02974

Dear Lieutenant Edmundson:

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#375911.

The Pharr Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified incident report. You claim that the submitted 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 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 information that other statutes make confidential, such as section 58.007 of the Family Code. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. For purposes of section 58.007, "child" means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2). Section 58.007 provides in pertinent part as follows:

(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.

...

(e) Law enforcement records and files concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a juvenile justice agency as that term is defined by Section 58.101, a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code, the child, and the child's parent or guardian.

...

(j) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (e), the custodian of the record or file shall redact:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child; and

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law.

Id. § 58.007(c), (e), (j). Upon review, we agree that the submitted report involves a juvenile engaged in delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997; therefore, the submitted report is subject to section 58.007. We note that the requestor may be the mother of the juvenile offender listed in the report. If the requestor is not the parent or guardian of the juvenile offender listed in the report, then the submitted information must be withheld in its entirety under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.007 of the Family Code. However, to the extent the requestor is a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender, she may inspect or copy any law enforcement records concerning her own child under section 58.007(e). *Id.* § 58.007(e). However, any personally identifiable information concerning another juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness must be redacted. *Id.* § 58.007(j)(1). Section 58.007(j) also provides that information subject to any other

exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Accordingly, we will address your argument under section 552.108(a)(1).

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon your representation and our review, we find that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1).¹ However, the department may not release as basic information any personally identifiable information concerning the juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness other than the juvenile offender to whom the requestor is a parent. *See* Fam. Code § 58.007(j)(1).

In summary, if the requestor is not a parent or guardian of the juvenile offender, then the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. If the requestor is a parent or guardian of the juvenile listed in the report, then, with the exception of basic information which must be released, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. However, in releasing the basic information, the department must redact any information that identifies or tends to identify a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness under section 58.007(j)(1) of the Family Code, other than the juvenile offender to whom the requestor is a parent.

¹We note that the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released in this instance. Because such information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office.

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, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Burgess
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

VB/jb

Ref: ID#375911

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)