



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 25, 2010

Ms. Christina R. Sanchez
Assistant City Attorney
El Paso County Courthouse
500 East San Antonio, Room 503
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2010-07566

Dear Ms. Sanchez:

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#380577 (OP-10-107).

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for the original complaint and all supplementary documents leading to indictments in Case No. 06-0600122. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments submitted by the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit written comments regarding availability of requested 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in part:

(a) Except as provided by Section 261.203, the following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent 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 [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] 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

(3) the identity of the person who made the report.

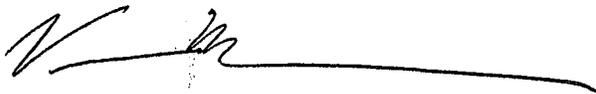
Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l). The submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged child abuse. *See id.* §§ 261.001 (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201 as person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes). Therefore, we find this information is generally confidential under section 261.201 of the Family Code. Information may not be withheld on the basis of section 261.201(a) from a parent of a child who was the victim of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect, unless the parent is alleged to have committed the abuse. *See id.* § 261.201(k). We note that although the requestor in this instance is the parent of the child victim who is the subject of the report, the requestor has been charged with neglect and makes this request acting on behalf of her spouse who is alleged to have committed the abuse. Accordingly, as you do not inform us that the sheriff

has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information, the sheriff must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.¹

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#380577

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.