



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 14, 2010

Mr. R. Kinley Hegglund, Jr.
Senior Assistant City Attorney
City of Wichita Falls
P.O. Box 1431
Wichita Falls, Texas 76307

OR2010-08630

Dear Mr. Hegglund:

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# 382605 (City ID# 84).

The City of Wichita Falls (the "city") received a request for 1) health inspection reports related to a specified restaurant, 2) complaints against the specified restaurant during a specified time period, 3) any reports of communicable diseases stemming from the specified restaurant, and 4) any records of phone calls regarding communicable diseases. 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 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 made confidential by other statutes, like section 81.046 of the Health and Safety Code, which provides in part:

(a) Reports, records, and information received from any source, including from a federal agency or from another state, furnished to a public health district, a health authority, a local health department, or the [Texas Department of State Health Services] that relate to cases or suspected cases of diseases or health conditions are confidential and may be used only for the purposes of this chapter.

(b) Reports, records, and information relating to cases or suspected cases of diseases or health conditions are not public information under [the Act], and may not be released or made public on subpoena or otherwise except as provided by Subsections (c), (d), and (f).

Health & Safety Code § 81.046(a), (b). In Open Records Decision No. 577 (1990), this office concluded that any information acquired or created during an investigation under chapter 81 of the Health and Safety Code is confidential and may not be released unless an exception set out in the statute applies. You state that the submitted information was gathered or created during an investigation conducted by the Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District pursuant to the provisions of chapter 81; thus, we agree that section 81.046(b) governs the release of this information. You do not inform us that any of the release provisions of section 81.046 are applicable in this instance. Accordingly, based upon your representations and our review of the submitted information, we agree that the city must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 81.046 of the Health and Safety 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,



Tamara Wilcox
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TW/dls

Ref: ID# 382605

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.