



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 4, 2010

Ms. Patricia Fleming
Assistant General Counsel
TDCJ - Office of the General Counsel
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2010-15075

Dear Ms. Fleming:

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# 395624.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for (1) all documents pertaining to staff disciplinary actions at the Travis State Jail for a specified time period; (2) in-service attendance records for a specified time period; and (3) all attendance records for three named individuals during a specified time period. You state you have or will release some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.107 and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.107(1) protects information that comes within the attorney-client privilege. When asserting the attorney-client privilege, a governmental body has the burden of providing the necessary facts to demonstrate the elements of the privilege in order to

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the [department] is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.134 is explicitly made subject to section 552.029, which provides in relevant part:

Notwithstanding Section 508.313 or 552.134, the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the [department] is subject to required disclosure under Section 552.021:

...

(8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Id. § 552.029(8). The information at issue consists of use of force reports and other disciplinary records of department employees. Upon review of the submitted documents, we agree a portion of the information at issue pertains to individuals confined as inmates in a facility operated by the department. We note, however, that basic information regarding an incident involving the use of force is subject to required disclosure pursuant to section 552.029. Basic information includes the time and place of the incident, the names of inmates and department employees who were involved, a brief narrative of the incident, a brief description of any injuries sustained by anyone involved, and information regarding any criminal charges or disciplinary actions that were filed as a result of the incident. The portions of the information at issue that pertain to inmates consist only of the name and department identification number of inmates involved in incidents involving the use of force. Thus, this information is basic information that is subject to required disclosure under section 552.029 of the Government Code and therefore is not subject to section 552.134 of the Government Code. *See id.* Further, we note the remaining information pertains solely to correctional officers and does not reference department inmates. Accordingly, we conclude none of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.134 of the Government Code.

We note some of the remaining information is subject to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.² Section 552.101 of the Government Code

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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 the doctrine of common-law privacy. Common-law privacy protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *See Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be demonstrated. *See id.* at 681-82. This office has found personal financial information not relating to the financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is generally excepted from disclosure under common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision No. 600 (1992) (public employee's withholding allowance certificate, designation of beneficiary of employee's retirement benefits, direct deposit authorization, and employee's decisions regarding voluntary benefits programs, among others, protected under common-law privacy). Upon review, we find the information we have marked is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Therefore, the department must withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We also note that some of the remaining information falls within the scope of section 552.117 of the Government Code. Section 552.117(a)(3) excepts from public disclosure the present and former home addresses and telephone numbers, social security numbers, and family member information of current or former department employees, regardless of whether the employee complies with section 552.1175 of the Government Code. *Id.* § 552.117(a)(3). Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.117(a)(3) of the Government Code.

In summary, the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.107 of the Government Code. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.117(a)(3) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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

withhold the information at issue. *See* Open Records Decision No. 676 at 6-7 (2002). First, a governmental body must demonstrate that the information constitutes or documents a communication. *Id.* at 7. Second, the communication must have been made “for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services” to the client governmental body. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). The privilege does not apply when an attorney or representative is involved in some capacity other than that of providing or facilitating professional legal services to the client governmental body. *See In re Tex. Farmers Ins. Exch.*, 990 S.W.2d 337, 340 (Tex. App. — Texarkana 1999, orig. proceeding) (attorney-client privilege does not apply if attorney acting in capacity other than that of attorney). Governmental attorneys often act in capacities other than that of professional legal counsel, such as administrators, investigators, or managers. Thus, the mere fact that a communication involves an attorney for the government does not demonstrate this element. Third, the privilege applies only to communications between or among clients, client representatives, lawyers, and lawyer representatives. *See* TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1)(A)-(E). Thus, a governmental body must inform this office of the identities and capacities of the individuals to whom each communication at issue has been made. Lastly, the attorney-client privilege applies only to a confidential communication, *id.* 503(b)(1), meaning it was “not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client or those reasonably necessary for the transmission of the communication.” *Id.* 503(a)(5). Whether a communication meets this definition depends on the intent of the parties involved at the time the information was communicated. *See Osborne v. Johnson*, 954 S.W.2d 180, 184 (Tex. App.—Waco 1997, no pet.). Moreover, because the client may elect to waive the privilege at any time, a governmental body must explain that the confidentiality of a communication has been maintained. Section 552.107(1) generally excepts an entire communication that is demonstrated to be protected by the attorney-client privilege unless otherwise waived by the governmental body. *See Huie v. DeShazo*, 922 S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein).

You state that the information you have marked constitutes privileged attorney-client communications between department employees and the department’s Office of General Counsel in order to provide legal advice concerning the dismissal of employees. You have identified the parties to the communications. You state the communications were intended to be confidential, and you indicate that the communications have maintained their confidentiality. Based on your representations and our review of the information at issue, we find that the department has established that the information you have marked consists of attorney-client privileged communications. Therefore, we conclude the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.

You claim some of the remaining information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.134 of the Government Code. Section 552.134 relates to inmates of the department and provides in relevant part:

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NK', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Nneka Kanu
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NK/em

Ref: ID# 395624

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)