



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 19, 2010

Ms. T. Trisha Dang
Assistant City Attorney
City of Corpus Christi
P.O. Box 9277
Corpus Christi, Texas 78469-9277

OR2010-15822

Dear Ms. Dang:

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# 397210.

The Corpus Christi Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified police report. You claim the requested 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 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 section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in part:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] 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); *see id.* § 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of Family Code ch. 261); Penal Code § 22.04(c) (defining “child” for purposes of injury to a child as a person 14 years of age or younger). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse under chapter 261 of the Family Code, so as to fall within the scope of section 261.201(a). However, the requestor is a parent of the child victim listed in the report and is not alleged to have committed the alleged or suspected abuse. Therefore, the department may not use section 261.201(a) to withhold this information from this requestor. Fam. Code § 261.201(k). Section 261.201(l)(2), however, states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Further, section 261.201(l)(3) states the identity of the reporting party must be withheld. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(3). You assert the remaining information is excepted from public disclosure

under section 552.108 of the Government Code. Therefore, we will address your argument under that exception.

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 claiming section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state that the remaining information relates to an active criminal case that is pending investigation and prosecution. Based upon your representation, we find that the release of this information will interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *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). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the remaining information.

However, basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*, and includes the identity of the complainant. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the remaining information under section 552.108(a)(1). However, in releasing basic information, the department must withhold the identity of the reporting party, which we have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201(1)(3) of the Family Code. The remaining basic information must be released to the requestor.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

¹We note the information being released contains confidential information regarding the child victim to which the requestor, as the child’s parent, has a right of access. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). If the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, then the department should again seek a decision from this office.

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 cursive script that reads "Jonathan Miles". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jonathan Miles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JM/dls

Ref: ID# 397210

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)