



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 7, 2011

Lieutenant C.E. Cox
Administrative Services
Bell County Sheriff's Office
P.O. Box 749
Belton, Texas 76513

OR2011-08088

Dear Lieutenant Cox:

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# 424714.

The Bell County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for information pertaining to a specified address during a specific time period. You state the sheriff is releasing some of the responsive information. 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 protected by other statutes, such as section 58.007 of the Family Code, which 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.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). Law enforcement records relating to juvenile conduct, whether delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision, that occurred on or after September 1, 1997, are confidential under section 58.007 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 51.03 (defining “delinquent conduct” and “conduct indicating a need for supervision” for purposes of title 3 of the Family Code). 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 id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we find that the information you labeled Call 3 and Call 4 involve allegations of a juvenile engaged in delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997. It does not appear, that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 of the Family Code apply to this information. Thus, Call 3 and Call 4 are subject to section 58.007(c), and must be withheld in their entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompassed section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in pertinent 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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Upon review, we find the remaining information was used or developed in investigations by the sheriff of alleged or suspected child abuse under chapter 261. *See id.* § 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section as

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against the disclosure of Call 3 and Call 4.

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), Penal Code § 22.011(c)(1) (defining "child" for purposes of Penal Code section 22.021). Accordingly, we find that the remaining information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You do not indicate that the sheriff has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information; therefore, we assume that no such rule exists. Given that assumption, we conclude the remaining information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, and the sheriff must withhold it in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code. See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

In summary, the sheriff must withhold Call 3 and Call 4 under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007 of the Family Code. The sheriff must withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

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,



Laura Ream Lemus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRL/em

Ref: ID# 424714

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)