



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 21, 2011

Mr. Peter Scott
Assistant City Attorney
City of Wichita Falls
P.O. Box 1431
Wichita Falls, Texas 76307

OR2011-08811

Dear Mr. Scott:

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# 421675.

The Wichita Falls Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified written statement pertaining to a specified case. You claim the submitted 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.

Initially, we note most of the submitted information is not responsive to the request because it is not the specified statement. This decision does not address the public availability of the non-responsive information, which we marked, and that information need not be released in response to the present request.

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. This exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential such as section 261.201(a) 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.

...

(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[.]

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

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2)-(3). You represent the submitted information was used or developed by the department in its investigation of alleged child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section 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). Accordingly, we find the submitted information is within the scope of section 261.201. In this instance, however, the submitted information reveals the requestor is the parent of the alleged child victims listed in the report. Further, the parent is not the individual alleged to have committed the alleged abuse. *See id.* § 261.201(k). Therefore, the department may not use section 261.201(a) to withhold the submitted statement from the requestor. *Id.* Section 261.201(l)(2) states, however, that any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Thus, we will address your argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code.

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). The department explains the statement pertains to a pending criminal investigation. Based on these representations and our review, we conclude release of the statement would 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) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, the department may withhold the statement under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government 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,



Kenneth Leland Conyer
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLC/eb

Ref: ID# 421675

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)