



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 9, 2011

Ms. Darlene Rakhar
Open Records
Williamson County Sheriff's Office
508 South Rock Street
Georgetown, Texas 78626

OR2011-11461

Dear Ms. Rakhar:

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# 430715.

The Williamson County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.130 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 information that other statutes make confidential, such as section 58.007 of the Family Code. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. 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* Fam. Code § 51.02(2). Section 58.007 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.

...

(e) Law enforcement records and files concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a juvenile justice agency as that term is defined by Section 58.101, a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code, the child, and the child's parent or guardian.

...

(j) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (e), the custodian of the record or file shall redact:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child; and

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law.

Id. § 58.007(c), (e), (j). The submitted report involves juvenile delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997; therefore, the submitted report is subject to section 58.007. Section 58.007(e) allows the review or copy of juvenile law enforcement records by a child's parent or guardian. *Id.* § 58.007(e). You inform us the requestor is the parent of a juvenile offender; therefore, the information pertaining to the requestor's child may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c). *See id.* § 58.007(e). However, any personally identifiable information concerning another

juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(1). We note section 58.007(j) further provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Thus, because you assert the submitted information is excepted under sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code, we will consider your claims under those exceptions. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2).

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 that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain how and why this exception is applicable to the information at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to a pending criminal prosecution. Based upon your representation and our review, we find that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information. *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 curium*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the sheriff may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1).¹ However, the sheriff may not release as basic information any personally identifiable information concerning any juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness other than the juvenile offender to whom the requestor is a parent. *See* Fam. Code § 58.007(j)(1). As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument.

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

¹We note that because the requestor is a parent of a juvenile offender in this instance, the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released. Because such information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the sheriff receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the sheriff must again seek a ruling from this office.

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 H. Holland
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

THH/bs

Ref: ID# 430715

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)