



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 23, 2011

Ms. Jo Spurger
Administrative Assistant
Somervell County Sheriff's Department
750 East Gibbs Boulevard
Glen Rose, Texas 76043

OR2011-12163

Dear Ms. Spurger:

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# 428282.

The Somervell County Sheriff's Department (the "department") received a request for any reports pertaining to specified incidents that occurred in July, September, and October 2010. You inform us the department has released some of the requested information. You claim 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. This exception encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which 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. *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 established. *Id.* at 681-82. The type of information considered highly intimate or embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683. Generally, only highly intimate information that implicates the privacy

of an individual is withheld. However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated that the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved, as well as the nature of certain incidents, the information must be withheld in its entirety to protect the individual's privacy.

In this instance, the submitted information reflects that the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved as well as the nature of the submitted information. Therefore, withholding only the identity of the individual involved or certain details of the incident from the requestor would not preserve the individual's common-law right to privacy. Accordingly, to protect the privacy of the individual to whom the information pertains, the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.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 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# 428282

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.