



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 21, 2012

Ms. Donna L. Clarke
Assistant Criminal District Attorney
Lubbock County Criminal District Attorney's Office
P.O. Box 10536
Lubbock, Texas 79408-3536

OR2012-04146

Dear Ms. Clarke:

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# 448992.

The Lubbock County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information related to an incident involving a named individual. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

Initially, we must address the timeliness of the sheriff's office's request for this decision. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes procedures a governmental body must follow in asking this office to determine whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a). Section 552.301(b) requires the governmental body to ask for the attorney general's decision and claim its exceptions to disclosure not later than the tenth business day after the date of its receipt of the written request for information. *See id.* § 552.301(b). Section 552.302 of the Government Code provides that if a governmental body fails to comply with section 552.301, the requested information is presumed to be subject to required public disclosure and must be released, unless there is a compelling reason to withhold any of the information. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ).

You inform us the sheriff's office received the present request for information on January 3, 2012; therefore, allowing for an intervening holiday, the sheriff's office's ten-business-day deadline under section 552.301(b) was January 18. The postage meter marks

on the envelope in which the sheriff's office mailed its request for this decision do not reflect the date of mailing. Thus, the sheriff's office has not provided proof that its request for this decision was mailed on or before the sheriff's office's deadline under section 552.301(b), and the submitted information is therefore presumed to be public under section 552.302. *See* Gov't Code § 552.308 (prescribing requirements for proof of compliance with Gov't Code § 552.301). This statutory presumption can generally be overcome when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). Because the sheriff's office claims section 552.101 of the Government Code, which can provide a compelling reason for non-disclosure, we will determine whether the submitted information must be withheld under that exception.

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 other statutes make confidential. Section 58.007 of the Family Code provides in part:

(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.

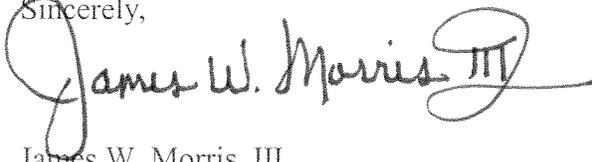
Fam. Code § 58.007(c); *see id.* § 51.03(a)-(b) (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct indicating need for supervision" for purposes of Fam. Code tit. 3). Section 58.007(c) is applicable to records of juvenile conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997. *See* Act of June 2, 1997, 75th Leg., R.S., ch. 1086, §§ 20, 55(a), 1997 Tex. Gen. Laws 4179, 4187, 4199; Open Records Decision No. 644 (1996). The juvenile must have been at least 10 years old and less than 17 years of age when the conduct occurred. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2) (defining "child" for purposes of title 3 of Family Code). We find the submitted information involves a juvenile suspect, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.007(c). We therefore conclude the sheriff's office must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.¹

¹As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your claim under section 552.101.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James W. Morris, III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/em

Ref: ID# 448992

Enc: Submitted information

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)