



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 16, 2012

Mr. Frank J. Garza
For City of Kyle
Davidson, Troilo, Ream & Garza, P.C.
7550 West Interstate 10, Suite 800
San Antonio, Texas 78229

OR2012-07261

Dear Mr. Garza:

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# 453875.

The City of Kyle (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information related to a specified incident. You claim that 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.

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:

...

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

Id. § 58.007(c), (e), (j). Upon review, we find the submitted information involves a juvenile engaged in delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997; therefore, the submitted information is subject to section 58.007. *See id.* § 51.03(a) (defining "delinquent conduct" for purposes of 58.007). We note, however, the requestor is a parent of the juvenile offender listed in the report. The requestor has a right to inspect law enforcement records concerning her child under section 58.007(e). *See id.* § 58.007(e). However, section 58.007 of the Family Code 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). We note the submitted information is also subject to section 261.201 of the Family Code. Accordingly, we will consider the applicability of this section to the submitted information, as well as your argument under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 also encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

(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 . . . 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.

Id. § 261.201(a), (k), (l). Upon review, we find the submitted information relates to an investigation of suspected child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1)(E) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code as including offense of sexual assault under section 22.011 of the Penal Code); *see also* Penal Code § 22.011 (defining “child” for

purposes of sexual assault of a child as person under 17 years of age). Thus, we find the submitted information is generally confidential under section 261.201 of the Family Code.

We note, however, the requestor is the parent of the child victim. Further, the requestor is not alleged to have committed the suspected abuse. Therefore, the city may not use section 261.201(a) to withhold the information at issue from this requestor. *Id.* § 261.201(k). Section 261.201(l)(3), however, states the identity of the reporting party must be withheld. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(3). Additionally, section 261.201(l)(2) states that any information excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Accordingly, we will consider your argument under section 552.108 for the submitted information.

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 an ongoing criminal investigation. Based upon your representation and our review, we find 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 curiam*, 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, which must be released, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. However, in releasing basic information, the city must withhold the identifying information of the reporting party under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201(l)(3) of the Family Code.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.

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

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, appearing to read 'VB', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Vanessa Burgess
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

VB/dls

Ref: ID# 453875

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)