



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 17, 2012

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

OR2012-13016

Dear Ms. Lentz:

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# 462621.

The Williamson County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information regarding a specified investigation. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 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."¹ Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in relevant 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:

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

(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:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a victim or witness under 18 years of age unless that victim or witness is:

(A) the child who is the subject of the report; or

(B) another child of the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative requesting the information;

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law; and

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

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l). We note the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged child abuse. *See id.* §§ 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of Family Code), 101.003(a) (defining “child” as person under eighteen years of age who is not and has not been married and who has not had the

disabilities of minority removed for general purposes). Accordingly, we find the submitted information is subject to section 261.201. However, we note the requestor is the mother of the child victims named in the report, and the requestor is not alleged to have committed the abuse. Therefore, the sheriff's office may not withhold the submitted information from the requestor under section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.201(k). However, section 261.201(1)(2) states that any information excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *See id.* § 261.201(1)(2). Because you raise sections 552.108 and 552.130 of the Government Code for the submitted information, we consider the applicability of these exceptions.

Section 552.108(a)(2) excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate that the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. You state the submitted information relates to a criminal investigation that ended in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on your representation and our review, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to the submitted information.

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 Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). We note basic information does not include information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code or a suspect's social security number. Thus, with the exception of basic information, the submitted information may be withheld under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

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

²The requestor has a special right of access under section 261.201(k) of the Family Code to some of the information being released. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). Accordingly, if the sheriff's office receives another request for this information from a different requestor, then the sheriff's office should again seek a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

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 "Kristi L. Wilkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kristi" being the most prominent.

Kristi L. Wilkins
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLW/ag

Ref: ID# 462621

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)