



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 22, 2012

Ms. Michelle T. Rangel
Assistant County Attorney
Fort Bend County
301 Jackson Street, Suite 728
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2012-13272

Dear Ms. Rangel:

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# 462677.

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim that the requested 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. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in pertinent part 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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:

...

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

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). Upon review, we agree the submitted information pertains to an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse, and thus is subject to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.001(1)(E) (definition of “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code includes indecency with child, sexual assault, and aggravated sexual assault under Penal Code sections 21.11, 22.011, and 22.021); *see also* Penal Code §§ 21.11 (defining “child” for purposes of section 21.11 as a minor younger than 17 years of age), 22.011(c)(1) (defining “child” for purposes of sections 22.011 and 22.021 as “a person younger than 17 years of age”), .021(b)(1). We note, however, the requestor is a parent of the child victim named in this report, and is not alleged to have committed the abuse. Accordingly, the sheriff may not withhold from this requestor information concerning the alleged abuse that would otherwise be confidential under section 261.201(a). *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). Further, section 261.201(l)(2) of the

Family Code states before a parent may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child, any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(1)(2). Thus, we will consider your remaining arguments for the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by section 58.007 of the Family Code, which provides in relevant 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.

Id. § 58.007(c). Juvenile law enforcement records relating to delinquent conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007(c). *See id.* § 51.03(a) (defining “delinquent conduct” for purposes of Fam. Code § 58.007). For purposes of section 58.007(c), a “child” is a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age at the time of the reported conduct. *See id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we find the submitted information involves a child allegedly engaged in delinquent conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. You do not indicate, nor does it appear, that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply to this information. Thus, the submitted information is confidential in its entirety pursuant to section 58.007(c) of the Family Code, and the sheriff must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government 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.

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

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,



Lauren E. Kleine
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LEK/bhf

Ref: ID# 462677

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)