ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

September 5, 2012

Mr. Daniel Bradford
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767

OR2012-14026

Dear Mr. Bradford:

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# 464189.

The Travis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 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."[1] Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 261.201 of the Family Code provides, in relevant part, as follows:

> (a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for

[1]The 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).

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, 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; and
>
> (3) the identity of the person who made the report.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2)-(3). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1)(E) (definition of child abuse includes indecency with a child under Penal Code section 21.11); *see also* Penal Code § 22.011(a) (defining child for purposes of indecency with a child as an individual younger than 17 years of age). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. We note the requestor is a parent of the child victim listed in the information, and the parent is not alleged to have committed

the abuse. Thus, pursuant to section 261.201(k), the information at issue may not be withheld from this requestor on the basis of section 261.201(a). *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). However, section 261.201(l)(3) states the identity of the reporting party shall be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(3). Further, section 261.201(l)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Accordingly, we will consider your argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code 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 claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information pertains to a pending prosecution by the Travis County District Attorney's Office. Based on your representation, we conclude the release of the information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *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). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note 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 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the sheriff's office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing the basic information, the sheriff's office must withhold the identity of the reporting party under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(l)(3) of the Family Code.[2]

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.

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[2]We note the information being released in this instance includes information that is confidential with respect to the general public. Therefore, if the sheriff's office receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the sheriff's office 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,

Nneka Kanu
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NK/bhf

Ref: ID# 464189

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)