



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 5, 2012

Mr. David K. Walker  
Montgomery County Attorney  
207 West Phillips, Suite 100  
Conroe, Texas 77301

OR2012-15969

Dear Mr. Walker:

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# 467262 (MCSO ORR# 2012-4988).

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified offense report. You state you will redact certain information in accordance with sections 552.130 and 552.147 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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<sup>1</sup>Section 552.130(c) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact, without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office, the motor vehicle record information described in subsections 552.130(a)(1) and (a)(3). *See* Gov't Code § 552.130(c); *see also id.* § 552.130(d)-(e) (requestor may appeal governmental body's decision to withhold information under section 552.130(c) to attorney general and governmental body withholding information pursuant to section 552.130(c) must provide certain notice to requestor). Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. *Id.* § 552.147(b).

<sup>2</sup>Although you also raised section 552.101 of the Government Code, you have not submitted arguments explaining how this exception applies to the submitted information. Therefore, we assume you have withdrawn it. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."<sup>3</sup> Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in relevant part:

[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, 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[.]

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<sup>3</sup>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, 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l) (2). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation by the sheriff's office of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1)(A) (defining "abuse" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of chapter 261). In this instance, however, the requestor is the parent of the child victim named in the report. Further, the parent is not the individual alleged to have committed the alleged abuse. *See id.* § 261.201(k). Accordingly, the sheriff's office may not withhold the submitted information from the requestor under section 261.201(a). *Id.* However, section 261.201(l)(2) states that any information excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Thus, we consider your argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code.

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: (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]" Gov't Code 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108 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 requested report relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, we conclude section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable and the release of the information you have marked 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). Accordingly, the sheriff's office may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released to the requestor.<sup>4</sup>

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.

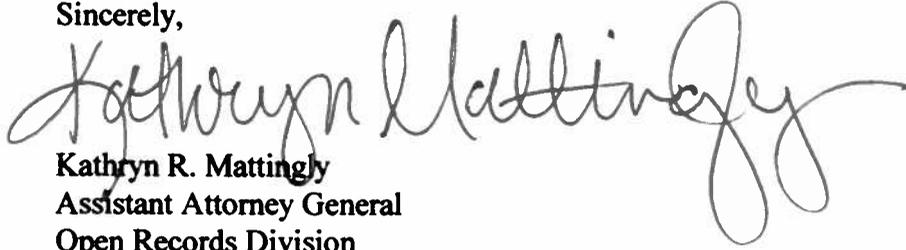
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free,

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<sup>4</sup>We note this requestor has a special right of access under section 261.201(k) of the Family Code to the information being released. Also, the information to be released contains information to which the requestor has a right of access under section 552.023 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* § 552.023. 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.

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 "Kathryn R. Mattingly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kathryn R. Mattingly  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KRM/bhf

Ref: ID# 467262

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)