



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 16, 2012

Ms. Erin Higginbotham
City of Copperas Cove
Denton, Navarro, Rocha & Bernal, P.C.
2500 West William Cannon, Suite 609
Austin, Texas 78745

OR2012-16475

Dear Ms. Higginbotham:

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# 468321.

The City of Copperas Cove (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for case number 11-1455. 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 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:

(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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k). The submitted information was used or developed in a child abuse investigation conducted by the city's police department. *See id.* §§ 101.003 (defining child for purposes of Fam. Code title 5), 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of Fam. Code ch. 261). Thus, we find the submitted information is within the scope of section 261.201. In this instance, the requestor is the parent of the child victim listed in the submitted information. However, this information reflects that the requestor is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect. Therefore, the submitted information may not be provided to the requestor pursuant to section 261.201(k). *See id.* § 261.201(k). Accordingly, we find the submitted information is confidential under section 261.201(a) of the Family Code and the city must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code. *See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).*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.

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

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

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 long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vanessa Burgess
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

VB/dls

Ref: ID# 468321

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)