



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 13, 2012

Ms. Suzanne Mitchell
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of State Health Services
P.O. Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78714-9347

OR2012-18252

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

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# 471147 (DSHS# 20773/2012).

The Terrell State Hospital (the "hospital") received a request for all information concerning the requestor's employment and termination. You state some of the information has been released. You claim the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.107, and 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.103 of the Government Code states in part:

(a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or

¹We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. See Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than those submitted to this office.

employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). The hospital has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show that the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing that (1) litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the district received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, no pet.); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). The hospital must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

The question of whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. See Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986). To demonstrate litigation is reasonably anticipated, the governmental body must furnish concrete evidence that litigation involving a specific matter is realistically contemplated and is more than mere conjecture. *Id.* This office has found a pending Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ("EEOC") complaint indicates litigation is reasonably anticipated. Open Records Decision Nos. 386 at 2 (1983), 336 at 1 (1982).

You state the requestor filed a claim of discrimination with the EEOC prior to the date of the hospital's receipt of the request for information. Thus, we agree the hospital reasonably anticipated litigation on the date it received the request. You state the requested information consists of employment-related records and is related to the anticipated litigation. Upon review, we agree the requested information is related to the anticipated litigation for purposes of section 552.103. We therefore conclude the hospital may withhold the information at issue under section 552.103 of the Government Code.²

We note that once the information has been obtained by all parties to the anticipated litigation, no section 552.103 interest exists with respect to that information. See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). We also note the applicability of

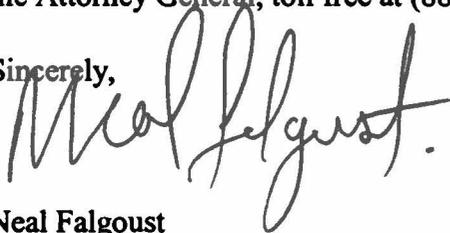
²As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

section 552.103 ends once the related litigation concludes or is no longer reasonably anticipated. See Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

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 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,



Neal Falgoust
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

NF/ag

Ref: ID# 471147

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)