



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 12, 2013

Mr. Jonathan Miles
DFPS Open Government Attorney
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
P.O. Box 149030
Austin, Texas 78714-9030

OR2013-13987

Dear Mr. Miles:

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# 495987 (DFPS Ref. Nos. 05222013H2L and 05222013ZP5).

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (the "department") received two requests for information pertaining to four named individuals under operation number 857739-338. You state you have released some responsive information to the requestor. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

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 exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential. Section 40.005 of the Human Resources Code authorizes the department to adopt rules for the purpose of preserving the confidentiality of information and provides in part:

¹We assume the "representative sample" of information 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.

(a) The department shall establish and enforce rules governing the custody, use, and preservation of the department's records, papers, files, and communications.

(b) The department shall prescribe safeguards to govern the use or disclosure of information relating to a recipient of a department service or to an investigation the department conducts in performing its duties and responsibilities. The safeguards must be consistent with the purposes of the department's programs and must comply with applicable state and federal law and department rules.

Hum. Res. Code § 40.005. Rules governing the confidentiality of department investigation and facility monitoring records are found at chapter 745 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. The department promulgated section 745.8485 of title 40 of the Administrative Code to make certain child care facility license investigations and records confidential. Section 745.8485 provides in relevant part:

(c) The following information relating to a completed investigation of child abuse or neglect is confidential and not available to the general public, except as provided under this chapter and applicable federal or state law:

- (1) The description of the allegation of child abuse or neglect;
- (2) The identity of the person making the allegation;
- (3) The files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed during an investigation[.]

40 T.A.C. § 745.8485(c)(1)-(3). You represent to this office the information you have marked pertains to investigations of alleged child abuse or neglect at a licensed child care facility, so as to be confidential under section 745.8485(c)(3). You also state the information at issue is not subject to disclosure under the provisions of chapter 745 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code that govern information that must be maintained in the department's monitoring files. *See id.* §§ 745.8481 (information in monitoring file is for most part available to general public), .8487 (department may release to public only those portions of abuse or neglect investigation record that must be filed in monitoring file), .8489 (except for certain specified information, department will maintain all records of abuse or neglect investigation separate from monitoring file). Based on your representations and our review, we find the information at issue falls within the scope of section 745.8485(c). In addition, section 745.8491 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code enumerates parties that may access confidential information pertaining to licensed facilities. *Id.* § 745.8491. In this instance, we find the requestor is not one of the enumerated persons eligible to receive copies of the information at issue under section 745.8491 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. Therefore, we conclude the department must withhold the information

you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 745.8485 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code.²

The department promulgated section 745.8483 of title 40 of the Administrative Code to make the name of an individual who makes a report that results in a child care facility license investigation confidential. *Id.* § 745.8483. The department asserts the information it has marked in the remaining information consists of information identifying individuals who made reports that resulted in investigations of child care operations. Upon review, we agree the information at issue is confidential pursuant to section 745.8483. Therefore, the department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 745.8483 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 745.8483 and section 745.8485 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. The remaining information must be released.

You also ask this office to issue a previous determination that would permit the department to withhold information subject to section 745.8483 and section 745.8485 of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Accordingly, this letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records 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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Michelle R. Garza
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MRG/som

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

Ref: ID# 495987

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)