



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 18, 2014

Mr. Robert G. Schleier, Jr.
Counsel for the City of Kilgore
Law Office of Robert G. Schleier, Jr., PC
116 North Kilgore Street
Kilgore, Texas 75662

OR2014-02956

Dear Mr. Schleier:

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# 514564.

The Kilgore Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified case involving the requestor's son. You claim 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.

Initially, we note the submitted information includes information subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a)(17) of the Government Code provides for the required public disclosure of "information that is also contained in a public court record." Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(17). The submitted court-filed review order is subject to section 552.022(a)(17) and must be released unless it is made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* Although you seek to withhold the court-filed document under section 552.108 of the Government Code, that section is discretionary in nature and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See id.* § 552.007; Open Records Decision Nos. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 177 at 3 (1977) (statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.108 subject to waiver). As such, the department may not withhold the court-filed document under section 552.108. However, we will consider your argument under section 552.108 for the information not subject to section 552.022. Further,

because section 552.101 makes information confidential under the Act, we will address its applicability to 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 states:

(a) Except as provided by Section 261.203, the following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, 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 Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law[.]

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261 and is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.001 (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 a parent of the child victim and is not accused of committing the alleged abuse. Therefore, the submitted information may not be withheld under section 552.101 on the basis of section 261.201(a) from this requestor. *See id.* § 261.201(k). However, section 261.201(l)(2) provides information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must be redacted. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Therefore, we will consider the department’s arguments against disclosure.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 58.007 of the Family Code which provides in relevant part:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

- (1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;
- (2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and
- (3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapters B, D, and E.

Id. § 58.007(c). Juvenile law enforcement records relating to delinquent conduct by a child that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007(c). *See id.* § 51.03(a) (defining “delinquent conduct”). For purposes of section 58.007(c), a “child” is a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age at the time of the reported conduct. *See id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we agree the submitted information involves a child allegedly engaged in delinquent conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. You do not indicate, nor does it appear, that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply to this information. Thus, the submitted information is confidential in its entirety under section 58.007(c) of the Family Code, and the department must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹

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

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.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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle R. Garza", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michelle R. Garza
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MRG/som

Ref: ID# 514564

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)