



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 27, 2014

Ms. Leticia Brysch
City Clerk
City of Baytown
P.O. Box 424
Baytown, Texas 77522-0424

OR2014-03560

Dear Ms. Brysch:

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# 517783 (Baytown Public Information Request No. 1730).

The Baytown Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified police report. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.117, and 552.147 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 58.007 of the Family Code. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997, are confidential under section 58.007(c), which provides as follows:

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.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). For purposes of section 58.007(c), a "child" is defined as a person ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age. *Id.* § 51.02(2)(A). Section 58.007(c) is not applicable to information that relates to a juvenile as a complainant, victim, witness, or other involved party; it is only applicable to juveniles listed as suspects or offenders. *See id.* §§ 58.007, 51.03 (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct indicating a need for supervision" for purposes of section 58.007). We have reviewed the submitted information and find that the submitted report does not identify a juvenile suspect or offender for purposes of section 58.007(c). Accordingly, we find that you have not demonstrated the applicability of section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. Thus, the department may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in 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 [the Family 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a victim or witness under 18 years of age unless that victim or witness is:

(A) the child who is the subject of the report; or

(B) another child of the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative requesting the information;

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law[.]

Id. § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(1)-(2). We find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse under chapter 261 of the Family Code, so as to be generally confidential under section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.001(1)(defining “abuse” for purposes of Fam. Code ch.261). In this instance, however, the requestor is the parent of the child victim and is not the individual alleged to have committed the suspected abuse. *See id.* § 261.201(k). Thus, the submitted information may not be withheld from this requestor on the basis of section 261.201(a). *Id.* Subsection 261.201(l)(1), however, states the personally identifiable information of a victim or witness who is under the age of eighteen and is not a child of the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative requesting the information must be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(1). Thus, in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code, the department must withhold the identifying information of a victim or witness who is under the age of eighteen and is not a child of the requestor under subsection 261.201(l)(1) of the Family Code. In addition, section 261.201(l)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Thus, we will address whether any portion of the remaining information is excepted from disclosure.

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 . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why this exception

is applicable to the information at issue. *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 information you have marked relates to a pending criminal investigation and release of the information will interfere with the investigation. *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, we find the department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.¹

You claim section 552.117 of the Government Code for some of the remaining information. Section 552.117(a)(1) excepts from disclosure the home addresses and telephone numbers, emergency contact information, social security numbers, and family member information of a current or former official or employee of a governmental body who requests that this information be kept confidential under section 552.024 of the Government Code. *See Gov't Code* §§ 552.024, .117. We note, however, that section 552.117 applies only to records that a governmental body is holding in an employment capacity. The information at issue consists of law enforcement records maintained by the department and is not held by the department as an employer. Therefore, we find section 552.117(a) of the Government Code does not apply in this situation, and the department may not withhold any portion of the information you have marked on that basis.

Section 552.147 of the Government Code provides that “[t]he social security number of a living person is excepted from” required public disclosure under the Act. *Id.* § 552.147(a). Therefore, the department may withhold the social security number you have marked under section 552.147(a).²

In summary, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(l)(1) of the Family Code, the department must withhold the personally identifiable information of a victim or witness who is under the age of eighteen and is not a child of the requestor. The department may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The department may withhold the social security number you have marked under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.³

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your argument under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy for this information.

²We note 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. *Gov't Code* § 552.147(b).

³We note the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released in this instance. *See Fam. Code* § 261.201(k). Because such information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office.

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 that reads "Tamara H. Holland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tamara H. Holland
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

THH/tch

Ref: ID# 517783

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)