OFFICE *of the* ATTORNEY GENERAL
GREG ABBOTT

March 3, 2003

Mr. Carvan E. Adkins
Taylor, Olson, Adkins, Sralla & Elam, L.L.P.
6000 Western Place, Suite 200
Fort Worth, Texas 76107-4654

OR2003-1317

Dear Mr. Adkins:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 177307.

The Hunt County MHMR Center (the "center"), which you represent, received a written request for, among other things, the criminal background check on the center's current medical director.[1] You contend that the information you submitted to this office as being responsive to the request is excepted from required disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from required public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, *statutory*, or by judicial decision." (Emphasis added.) You explain that the center is a "local MHMR community center." *See* Health & Safety Code § 531.002 (defining "community center"). The center is authorized to obtain certain criminal history record information ("CHRI") from the Texas Department of Public Safety pursuant to section 411.115(c) of the Government Code.[2] However, the center is prohibited from releasing such CHRI to anyone "other than the contractor that employs the person who is the subject of the criminal history record

[1]You indicate that the other requested information has been made available to the requestor.

[2]Community centers are authorized to obtain only CHRI regarding sexual offenses, drug-related offenses, theft, criminal homicide, assault or battery, or an offense involving personal injury or threat. Health & Safety Code § 411.115(c).

information, except on court order or with the consent of the person who is the subject of the criminal history record information." Gov't Code § 411.115(d). Because none of the exceptions to non-disclosure appear to apply in this instance, we conclude that the center must withhold any CHRI it may have pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code.

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 example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

David R. Saldivar
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DRS/RWP/seg

Ref: ID# 177307

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Charles G. Galloway
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(w/o enclosures)