



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 3, 2006

Ms. Julie Joe
Assistant County Attorney
Travis County
P. O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2006-04544

Dear Ms. Joe:

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# 247866.

The Travis County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney") received a request for all files, records, and any other documents in possession of the district attorney pertaining to the conviction of a named individual. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note that the submitted information is subject to section 552.022(a)(1) of the Government Code, which provides that:

the following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure under this chapter unless they are expressly confidential under other law:

(1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, except as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted information constitutes a completed investigation made by the district attorney. A completed investigation must be released under section 552.022(a)(1) unless the information is excepted from disclosure under

section 552.108 or expressly confidential under other law. Because information subject to section 552.022(a)(1) may be withheld under section 552.108, we will address your section 552.108 claim.

Section 552.108 of the Government Code provides, in pertinent part:

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from [required public disclosure] if:

...

(4) it is information that:

(A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or

(B) represents the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state.

Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(4). A governmental body must reasonably explain how and why section 552.108 is applicable to the information that the governmental body seeks to withhold under this exception. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A); *Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977); Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2-3 (1986). In *Curry v. Walker*, 873 S.W.2d 379 (Tex. 1994), the Texas Supreme Court held that a request for a district attorney's "entire litigation file" was "too broad" and, quoting *National Union Fire Insurance Co. v. Valdez*, 863 S.W.2d 458 (Tex. 1993, orig. proceeding), held that "the decision as to what to include in [the file] necessarily reveals the attorney's thought processes concerning the prosecution or defense of the case." *Curry*, 873 S.W.2d at 380.

The present request is for "all files, records, and any other documents in the possession of the Travis County District Attorney's Office pertaining to the conviction of [a named individual.]" You state that this request is for the entire prosecution file of the specified cause number. You further assert that all of the requested records were created and assembled in anticipation of criminal litigation and reflect the mental impressions and legal reasoning of the district attorney. Based on your arguments and our review of the information in question, we find that section 552.108(a)(4) is applicable in this instance.

We note, however, that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per*

curiam, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). See Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information made public by *Houston Chronicle*). Basic information includes a detailed description of the offense as well as the identity and description of the complainant. *Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d 177; ORD127 at 3-4. We note that the submitted information contains three complainants who were victims of sexual assaults. The identifying information of a victim of sexual assault must be withheld under common law privacy. See *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 568, 683 (Tex. 1976) Open Records Decision Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982). We have marked the types of identifying information that are protected by common law privacy and must not be released as basic information. The remaining basic information must be released.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, the district attorney may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(4) of the Government Code. With respect to basic information, the district attorney must withhold the sexual assault victims' identifying information under common law privacy. The remaining basic information must be released.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Candice M. De La Garza
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CMD/krl

Ref: ID# 247866

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Texas Innocense Network
Attn: Karen Hamilton
University of Houston Law Center
100 Law Center
Houston, Texas 77204-6060
(w/o enclosures)