ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 16, 2006

Ms. Carla M. Cordova
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2006-12118

Dear Ms. Cordova:

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# 261936.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information relating to any pending disciplinary action against the requestor. You state that some of the requested information either has been or will be released. You claim that other responsive information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the information you submitted.

Section 552.134 of the Government Code relates to inmates of the department. This exception states that "[e]xcept as provided by Subsection (b) [of section 552.134] or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the [department] is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.029 provides in part that notwithstanding section 552.134, the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department is subject to required disclosure:

> (8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Id. § 552.029(8). Thus, the legislature explicitly made section 552.134 subject to section 552.029. We find that section 552.134(a) is generally applicable to the submitted information. We note, however, that the information relates to an alleged crime involving an inmate. The department must release basic information about that incident under section 552.029(8). The basic information that must be released includes the time and place of the incident, the names of inmates and of department employees who were involved, a brief narrative of the incident, a brief description of any injuries sustained by anyone involved, and information regarding any criminal charges or disciplinary actions that were filed as a result of the incident. With the exception of the information that must be released under section 552.029, the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.134.

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,

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/sdk

Ref: ID# 261936

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Ms. Kelli Thomas
3087 Elinor Street
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(w/o enclosures)