



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 13, 2006

Mr. Denis C. McElroy
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2006-13391

Dear Mr. McElroy:

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# 267968.

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for information related to a specified address for the past thirty years (tracking number 069-07). You state that some responsive information has been released to the requestor, but claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. You state that the city will redact the social security numbers in the requested records based on section 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exception 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. This section encompasses information other statutes make confidential. You raise section 58.007 of the Family Code for incident report number 00235526. Section 58.007 provides in part as follows:

¹Section 552.147(b) 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.

(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 Subchapter B.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). Incident report number 00235526 involves juvenile conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. You state that the city does not believe that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply. Thus, we agree that incident report number 00235526 is confidential pursuant to section 58.007(c) of the Family Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

You also raise section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. Chapter 261 of the Family Code is applicable to information that relates to reports and investigations of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. Section 261.201 provides in part:

(a) 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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a); *see also id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of Fam. Code ch. 261). You raise section 261.201 for the remaining records. Because this information consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261, the information is within the

scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the city has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the remaining information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code, and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city must withhold incident report number 00235526 under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.007 of the Family Code. The city must withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family 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, 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cindy Nettles".

Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/vh

Ref: ID# 267968

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Melody McDonald
Fort Worth Star-Telegram
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Fort Worth, Texas 76110
(w/o enclosures)