ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 17, 2008

Mr. Joseph J. Gorfida, Jr.
Assistant City Attorney
City of Richardson
P.o. Box 831078
Richardson, Texas 75083-1078

OR2008-15719

Dear Mr. Gorfida:

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# 328041.

The City of Richardson (the "city") received a request for all call or incident reports relating to a specific address during October 2007 through May 2008. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. 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 made confidential by statute, such as section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. Section 261.201(a) provides as follows:

> (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, 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). You assert that the submitted information consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261. *See id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for the purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Based on your representations and our review, we find that the submitted information is within the scope of chapter 261. You do not indicate that the city's police department has adopted a rule governing the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute). Thus, the city must withhold the submitted report in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.[1] As this ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

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 file suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such a challenge, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3). If the governmental body does not file suit over 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

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[1]We note the requestor may be a parent of the child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect. Accordingly, he may have a right of access to certain abuse and neglect records maintained by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Section 261.201(g) of the Family Code provides that DFPS, upon request and subject to its own rules, "shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section if [DFPS] has edited the information to protect the confidentiality of the identity of the person who made the report and any other person whose life or safety may be endangered by the disclosure." Fam. Code § 261.201(g).

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 challenge 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,

Christina Alvarado
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CA/ma

Ref: ID#328041

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)