



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 2, 2009

Mr. C. Patrick Phillips
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2009-01307

Dear Mr. Phillips:

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# 334431 (City of Fort Worth Public Information Request No. 0654-09).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to the requestor's minor child. You state that Texas motor vehicle information has been redacted from the submitted documents pursuant to previous determinations issued to the city under section 552.130 of the Government Code in Open Records Letter Nos. 2006-14726 (2006) and 2007-00198 (2007).¹ You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions 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. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 58.007 of the Family Code. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. *See* Fam. Code § 51.03(a), (b). For purposes of section 58.007, "child" means a person who is ten years of age or older and

¹*See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a); Open Records Decision No. 673 at 7-8 (2001) (previous determinations).

under seventeen years of age. *See id.* § 51.02(2). The relevant language of section 58.007 reads as follows:

(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, D, and E.

...

(e) Law enforcement records and files concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a juvenile justice agency as that term is defined by Section 58.101, a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code, the child, and the child's parent or guardian.

...

(j) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (e), the custodian of the record or file shall redact:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child; and

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c), (e), (j). Upon review of the submitted reports, we agree that they involve allegations of a juvenile engaged in delinquent conduct and conduct indicating a need for supervision occurring after September 1, 1997. Thus, the submitted information is subject to section 58.007. *See id.* § 51.03(a)-(b) (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct

indicating need for supervision” for purposes of Fam. Code tit. 3). You indicate, however, and the submitted information reflects, that the requestor is a parent of the juvenile involved. As such, the requestor would have a right to inspect juvenile law enforcement records concerning her child pursuant to section 58.007(e). *See id.* § 58.007(e). Section 58.007(j) provides, however, that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Accordingly, we will address your claims under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code for some of the submitted reports.

Section 552.101 also encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides:

(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.

Id. § 261.201(a). You claim that report number 08-106965 pertains to an investigation of alleged child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section as person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes). Based upon your representations and our review, we find that this information falls within the scope of section 261.201. You have not indicated that the department has a rule governing the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, report number 08-106965 is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code and must be withheld in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code.²

Next, we address your claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code for report number 08-107382. Section 552.108(a)(1) excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection,

²We note that if the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has created a file on this case, the child’s parent may have the statutory right to review these files. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(g).

investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). Generally, a governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must reasonably explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us that the report number 08-107382 relates to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon your representation and our review, we conclude that the release of the report number 08-107382 would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), writ ref’d n.r.e., 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976) (per curiam) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to report number 08-107382.

However, basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.108. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Such basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-8; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold report number 08-107382 under section 552.108(a)(1). We note that you have the discretion to release all or part of report number 08-107382 that is not otherwise confidential by law. Gov’t Code § 552.007.

In summary, the department must withhold report number 08-106965 under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. With the exception of basic information, which must be released, the department may withhold report number 08-107382 under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released to the requestor in accordance with section 58.007(e) of the Family Code.³

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information 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 information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Hotline, toll free,

³We note that the requestor has a special right of access to some of the information being released in this instance. Gov’t Code § 552.023 (person or person’s authorized representative has a special right of access to records that contain information relating to the person that are protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests). Because such information may be confidential with respect to the general public, if the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office.

at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

Sincerely,



Laura E. Ream
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LER/jb

Ref: ID# 334431

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)