



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

February 9, 2009

Ms. Michelle T. Rangel
Assistant County Attorney
Fort Bend County
301 Jackson Street, Suite 728
Richmond, Texas 77469-3108

OR2009-01606

Dear Ms. Rangel:

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# 334278.

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for all call slips and reports during a specified time period pertaining to a named individual. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

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 the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). This office has held the compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. United States Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual's

¹We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one's criminal history). Furthermore, we find the compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public.

The present request seeks all call slips and reports involving a named individual. We find this request for unspecified law enforcement records implicates the named individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the sheriff maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the sheriff must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note you have submitted a report and associated call slip which do not list the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant. Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides as follows:

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). Report number 08-315 and the associated call slip consist of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261; therefore, this information is within the scope of section 261.201. You do not indicate the sheriff has adopted a rule governing the release of this type of information; therefore, we assume no such regulation exists. Based on this assumption, we conclude report number 08-315 and the associated call slip are confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code, and the sheriff must withhold them under section 552.101 of the Government Code.²

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of the requested information.

In summary, to the extent the sheriff maintains any law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, they must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The sheriff must withhold report number 08-315 and the associated call slip under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.

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, 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,



Emily Sitton
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EBS/eb

Ref: ID# 334278

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)