



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

July 9, 2009

Ms. Luz E. Sandoval-Walker
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
The City of El Paso
2 Civic Center Plaza, 9th Floor
El Paso, Texas 79901

OR2009-09439

Dear Ms. Sandoval-Walker:

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# 348611.

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for information related to a specific case number. You claim that the submitted 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 information.

We initially note that the submitted information contains the requestor's fingerprints. Chapter 560 of the Government Code provides that a governmental body may not release fingerprint information except in certain limited circumstances. *See* Gov't Code §§ 560.001 (defining "biometric identifier" to include fingerprints), 560.002 (prescribing manner in which biometric identifiers must be maintained and circumstances in which they can be released), 560.003 (biometric identifiers in possession of governmental body exempt from disclosure under the Act). The submitted fingerprint information is confidential under section 560.003; however, the requestor has a special right of access to his own fingerprint information. *See id.* § 560.002(1). Therefore, the department must release this information, which we have marked, pursuant to section 560.002.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." *Id.*

§ 552.101. Section 552.101 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. *See Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). The type of information considered intimate or embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683. The responsive incident report relates to an alleged sexual assault. Generally, only information that either identifies or tends to identify a victim of sexual assault or another sex-related offense must be withheld under common-law privacy. However, a governmental body is required to withhold an entire report when this identifying information is inextricably intertwined with other releasable information or when the requestor knows the identity of the alleged victim. *See Open Records Decisions Nos. 393 (1983), 339 (1982); see also Open Records Decision No. 440 (1986)* (detailed descriptions of serious sexual offenses must be withheld). In this instance, the submitted report demonstrates that the requestor knows the identity of the alleged sexual assault victim. Accordingly, with the exception of the requestor's fingerprints, which the department must release, the department must withhold the requested report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.¹

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,



Ryan T. Mitchell
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RTM/rf

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.

Ref: ID# 348611

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)
