



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

GREG ABBOTT

August 21, 2009

Ms. Michelle Rangel
Assistant County Attorney
Fort Bend County Attorney's Office
301 Jackson Street, Suite 728
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2009-11821

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# 353532.

The Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff") received a request for a specified incident report. 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 public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which 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, audiotapes, videotapes, and working papers used or developed in an investigation under this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

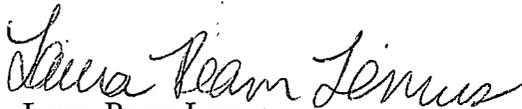
Fam. Code § 261.201(a). You claim that the submitted report was used or developed in an investigation of child abuse by the sheriff under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.*

§ 261.001 (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 on your representation and our review, we find that the submitted report is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated that the sheriff 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 submitted report is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code and must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining claim against the disclosure of the submitted report.

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,


Laura Ream Lemus
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LRL/jb

Ref: ID# 353532

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note that if the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services has created a file on this case, the child’s parent, managing conservator, or legal representative may have the statutory right to review these files. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(g).