



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 24, 2009

Mr. Charles H. Weir
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2009-11892

Dear Mr. Weir:

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# 357734 (ORR 2009-3814).

The San Antonio Police Department (the "department") received a request for information relating to two specified case numbers. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the information you submitted.

We note that the department did not comply with its deadlines under section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting this decision. Section 552.301 prescribes procedures that must be followed in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(a). Section 552.301(b) requires the governmental body to ask for the attorney general's decision and claim its exceptions to disclosure not later than the tenth business day after the date of its receipt of the written request for information. *See id.* § 552.301(b). Section 552.301(e) provides that the governmental body must submit to this office, not later than the fifteenth day after the date of its receipt of the request, (1) written comments stating why the governmental body's claimed exceptions apply to the information that it seeks to withhold; (2) a copy of the request for information; (3) a signed statement of the date on which the governmental body received the request or evidence sufficient to establish that date; and (4) the specific information that the governmental body seeks to withhold or representative samples if the

information is voluminous. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A)-(D). If the governmental body fails to comply with section 552.301, the requested information is presumed to be subject to required public disclosure under section 552.302 of the Government Code and must be released, unless there is a compelling reason to withhold any of the information. *See id.* § 552.302; *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ).

You inform us that the department received the instant request for information on July 7, 2009; therefore, the department's deadlines under subsections 552.301(b) and 552.301(e) were July 21 and July 28, respectively. The department requested this decision by United States mail meter-marked August 3. Thus, the department did not comply with section 552.301, and the responsive information is therefore presumed to be public under section 552.302. This statutory presumption can generally be overcome when information is confidential by law or third-party interests are at stake. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 630 at 3 (1994), 325 at 2 (1982). Because your claim under section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason for non-disclosure, we will address that exception.

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 exception encompasses information that other statutes make confidential. You raise section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in part:

(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 [the Family 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] 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 [chapter 261 of the Family Code] or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

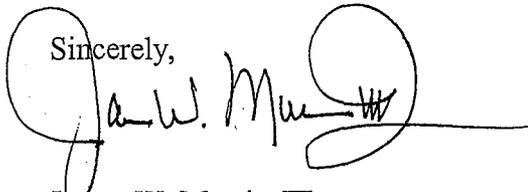
Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We find that the submitted information was used or developed in investigations of alleged or suspected child abuse under chapter 261 of the Family Code, so as to fall within the scope of section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of Fam. Code ch. 261). As you do not indicate that the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information, we assume

that no such rule exists. Given that assumption, we conclude that the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.¹ See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (addressing predecessor statute).

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Morris, III", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/cc

Ref: ID# 357734

Enc: Submitted information

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note that a parent or legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect 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. See Fam. Code § 261.201(g).