



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

December 7, 2009

Ms. M. Ann Montgomery
Assistant Ellis County and District Attorney
Temporary Administration Building
1201 North Highway 77, Suite 104
Waxahachie, Texas 75165-7832

OR2009-17217

Dear Ms. Montgomery:

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# 368395.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Department (the "sheriff") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim that the requested 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 exempts 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. Section 58.007 of the Family Code provides in part:

(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 Subchapters 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). The submitted report involves juvenile delinquent conduct occurring after September 1, 1997; therefore, the submitted report is subject to section 58.007. *See id.* § 51.03 (defining "delinquent conduct" for purposes of section 58.007). In this instance, however, the requestor is the parent of the juvenile involved. Section 58.007(e) allows a child's parent or guardian access to the juvenile law enforcement records of the child. *Id.* § 58.007(e). However, section 58.007(j) provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Thus, because you assert the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code, we must address whether the submitted information is excepted on this basis. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2).

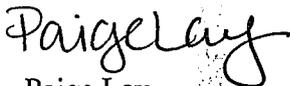
Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime." Gov't Code § 552.108. A governmental body claiming section 552.108 of the Government Code 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*, 531 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You inform us that the submitted information is related to a pending criminal case. Based on this representation, we conclude that section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the information you have marked. *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. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex 1976) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases). Thus, the sheriff may withhold the information you have marked under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.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, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/eeg

Ref: ID# 368395

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note that the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released in this instance. Because such information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the sheriff receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the sheriff must again seek a ruling from this office.