



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

April 26, 2011

Mr. William P. Chesser  
City Attorney  
City of Brownwood  
P.O. Box 1389  
Brownwood, Texas 76804

OR2011-05665

Dear Mr. Chesser:

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# 415454.

The City of Brownwood (the "city") received a request for information related to a specified incident involving the requestor's child. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered your claims and reviewed the submitted information.

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. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses information that other statutes make confidential, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in part:

- (a) [T]he 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.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] or the Texas Youth Commission, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a victim or witness under 18 years of age unless that victim or witness is:

(A) the child who is the subject of the report; or

(B) another child of the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative requesting the information;

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law; and

(3) the identity of the person who made the report.

Fam Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l). Upon review, we find that the responsive information consists of files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* §.261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of Fam. Code ch. 261). Therefore, we find this

information is subject to section 261.201 of the Family Code. However, the requestor is the parent of the child victim and is not alleged to have committed the suspected abuse. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the responsive information from this requestor on the basis of section 261.201(a). *See id.* 261.201(k). Nonetheless, before the city provides information concerning this report, it must redact the identity of the person making the report. *See id.* § 261.201(l)(3). In addition, the city must redact any information that is otherwise excepted from required disclosure under the Act. *See id.* § 261.201(l)(2). As you raise section 552.108, we will consider its applicability to this information.

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)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108 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*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to an ongoing criminal case and release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, and prosecution of a crime. Based on your representations and our review, we find that release of the submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

We note, however, that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Accordingly, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information pursuant to section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing basic information, the city must withhold the identity of the person who made the report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(l)(3) of the Family Code.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> In releasing basic information, the city must withhold the identity of the person who made the report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(l)(3) of the Family Code.

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<sup>1</sup>We note the requestor in this case has a right of access to information that would otherwise be confidential with respect to the general public. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). Thus, if the city receives another request for this same information from a different requestor, the city must again seek a ruling from this office.

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](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,



Cindy Nettles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CN/dls

Ref: ID# 415454

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)