



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 22, 2012

Ms. Michelle L. Villarreal
Assistant City Attorney
City of Waco
P.O. Box 2570
Waco, Texas 76702-2570

OR2012-13295

Dear Ms. Villarreal:

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# 463213 (Waco Ref. No. LGL-12-865).

The Waco Police Department (the "department") received a request for the arrest form for a named individual and information pertaining to a specified incident number. You state the department has released some of the requested information. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.119 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 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. Access to medical records is governed by the Medical Practice Act (the "MPA"), Occ. Code §§ 151.001-168.202. Section 159.002 of the MPA provides:

- (a) A communication between a physician and a patient, relative to or in connection with any professional services as a physician to the patient, is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(b) A record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that is created or maintained by a physician is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(c) A person who receives information from a confidential communication or record as described by this chapter, other than a person listed in Section 159.004 who is acting on the patient's behalf, may not disclose the information except to the extent that disclosure is consistent with the authorized purposes for which the information was first obtained.

Occ. Code § 159.002. Information that is subject to the MPA includes both medical records and information obtained from those medical records. *See* Occ. Code §§ 159.002, .004; Open Records Decision No. 598 (1991). This office has concluded that the protection afforded by section 159.002 extends only to records created by either a physician or someone under the supervision of a physician. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 487 (1987), 370 (1983), 343 (1982). Upon review, we find none of the submitted information consists of a record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that was created or maintained by a physician. Accordingly, none of the submitted information may be withheld under section 552.101 on the basis of the MPA.

Section 552.101 also encompasses information made confidential by other statutes, such as section 143.090 of the Local Government Code. We note the City of Waco is a civil service city under chapter 143 of the Local Government Code. Section 143.090 provides as follows:

A department, [the Fire Fighters' and Police Officers' Civil Service Commission], or municipality may not release a photograph that depicts a police officer unless:

- (1) the officer has been charged with an offense by indictment or by information;
- (2) the officer is a party in a civil service hearing or a case before a hearing examiner or in arbitration;
- (3) the photograph is introduced as evidence in a judicial proceeding;
or
- (4) the officer gives written consent to the release of the photograph.

Loc. Gov't Code § 143.090. The submitted information contains photographs of department police officers. You do not indicate the police officers depicted in the submitted photographs have provided the department with written consent to release the photographs. You do not

inform us, and it does not appear, that any of the exceptions to withholding the photographs under section 143.090 are applicable. Therefore, we conclude the department must withhold the police officer's photographs, which we have marked, under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 143.090 of the Local Government Code.¹

Section 552.101 also 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. *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. This office has found that some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses are excepted from required public disclosure under common-law privacy. See Open Records Decision Nos. 470 (1987) (illness from severe emotional and job-related stress), 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical handicaps). Upon review, we find the information we have marked is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Therefore, the department must withhold the information we have marked pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note some of the remaining information is subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.² Section 552.130 excepts from disclosure information that relates to a motor vehicle operator's license or driver's license or a motor vehicle title or registration issued by a Texas agency, or an agency of another state or country. See *id.* § 552.130(a)(1)-(2). Upon review, we find the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 143.090 of the Local Government Code and common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.

¹As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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,



Jennifer Luttrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/som

Ref: ID# 463213

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)