



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

June 3, 2013

Mr. Matthew B. Cross  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of El Paso  
P.O. Box 1890  
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2013-09153

Dear Mr. Cross:

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# 490318 (City ID# 13-1026-2459).

The El Paso Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case number. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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. Section 552.101 encompasses the common-law right of privacy, which protects information if it (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). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be established. *Id.* at 681-82. The type of information considered intimate and 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 also 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 of no legitimate concern to the public. Accordingly, the department must generally withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find no portion of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and not of legitimate public concern. Accordingly, none of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses constitutional privacy, which consists of two interrelated types of privacy: (1) the right to make certain kinds of decisions independently and (2) an individual's interest in avoiding disclosure of personal matters. *See Whalen v. Roe*, 429 U.S. 589, 599-600 (1977); Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 3-5 (1992), 478 at 4 (1987), 455 at 3-7. The first type protects an individual's autonomy within "zones of privacy" which include matters related to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, and child rearing and education. ORD 455 at 4. The second type of constitutional privacy requires a balancing between the individual's privacy interests and the public's need to know information of public concern. *Id.* at 7. The scope of information protected is narrower than that under the common-law doctrine of privacy; constitutional privacy under section 552.101 is reserved for "the most intimate aspects of human affairs." *Id.* at 5 (quoting *Ramie v. City of Hedwig Village, Tex.*, 765 F.2d 490 (5th Cir. 1985)). Upon review, we find the department has failed to demonstrate how any of the remaining information is protected by constitutional privacy. Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 in conjunction with constitutional privacy.

We note the requestor is the spouse of the individual whose privacy interests are at issue. Thus, the requestor may be the authorized representative of the individual whose privacy interests are at issue and may have a right of access to information pertaining to that individual that would otherwise be confidential under common-law privacy. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(a) ("person's authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests"); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning himself). Because we are unable to determine whether the requestor is the authorized representative of her spouse, we must rule conditionally. Accordingly, if the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of her spouse, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy and release the remaining information. However, if the requestor is acting as her spouse's

authorized representative, the department must release the submitted information in its entirety to this requestor.

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,



Sean Nottingham  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

SN/tch

Ref: ID# 490318

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)