



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 30, 2014

Ms. Jeanne C. Collins  
General Counsel  
El Paso Independent School District  
6531 Boeing Drive  
El Paso, Texas 79925

OR2014-09265

Dear Ms. Collins:

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# 527201 (EPISD PR #14.59).

The El Paso Independent School District (the "district") received two requests for information related to a specified case. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have received arguments from the requestors. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested third party may submit written comments stating why information should or should not be released). We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the district has redacted student-identifying information in the submitted police report pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), section 1232g of title 20 of the United States Code.<sup>1</sup> However, in this instance, the information at issue was created by the district's police department (the "department") for

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<sup>1</sup>The United States Department of Education Family Policy Compliance Office (the "DOE") has informed this office that FERPA does not permit state and local educational authorities to disclose to this office, without parental consent, unredacted, personally identifiable information contained in education records for the purpose of our review in the open records ruling process under the Act. The DOE has determined that FERPA determinations must be made by the educational authority in possession of the education records. We have posted a copy of the letter from the DOE to this office on the Attorney General's website: <http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/20060725usdoe.pdf>.

a law enforcement purpose. FERPA is not applicable to law enforcement records maintained by the department that were created by the department for a law enforcement purpose. *See* 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(a)(4)(B)(ii); 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.3, 99.8. The submitted information relates to a criminal investigation by the department. Thus, these records are not subject to FERPA, and no portion of these records may be withheld on that basis. In this instance, we can discern the nature of the redacted information; thus, being deprived of this information does not inhibit our ability to make a ruling. In the future, however, the district should refrain from redacting any information that it is not authorized to withhold in seeking an open records ruling. Failure to do so may result in the presumption the redacted information is public. *See* Gov't Code § 552.302.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” *Id.* § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides in relevant part:

(a) Except as provided by Section 261.203, 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 this 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 this chapter 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 this chapter or in providing services as a result of an investigation.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We note the district is not an agency authorized to conduct an investigation under chapter 261. *See id.* § 261.103 (listing agencies that may conduct child abuse investigations). However, the submitted information pertains to an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse conducted by the department, which is an agency authorized to conduct investigations under chapter 261.

Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code, so as to fall within the scope of section 261.201(a). *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201 as person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes), 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). As you do not indicate the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information, we assume no such rule exists.

Therefore, we conclude the submitted information is confidential under section 261.201(a). Accordingly, the district must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.<sup>2</sup>

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl\\_ruling\\_info.shtml](http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Tamara R. Strain  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

TRS/som

Ref: ID# 527201

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>2</sup>Because our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your arguments against disclosure.