



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 18, 2014

Mr. Tillman S. Roots
Assistant District Attorney
Comal County Criminal District Attorney's Office
150 North Seguin, Suite 307
New Braunfels, Texas 78130

OR2014-10528

Dear Mr. Roots:

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# 526418.

The Comal County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information regarding a specified case number. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 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. Section 552.101 encompasses section 58.007 of the Family Code, which makes confidential juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997. *See* Fam. Code § 58.007(c). Section 58.007 provides, in relevant part, the following:

(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 [the Act], or other law.

Id. § 58.007(c), (e), (j). Upon review, we find the submitted information involves alleged juvenile delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision that occurred after September 1, 1997. *See id.* §§ 51.02(2) (for purposes of section 58.007(c), "child" means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age when the conduct occurred), .03(a), (b) (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct indicating a need for supervision"). However, the requestor may be a parent or guardian of one of the juvenile offenders at issue. Therefore, we must rule conditionally. If the requestor is not a parent or guardian of one of the juvenile offenders, then the sheriff's office must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. If the requestor is a parent or guardian of one of the juvenile offenders, then the sheriff's office may not withhold the submitted information on that ground. *See id.* § 58.007(e). However, section 58.007(j)(2) provides information subject

to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or law must be redacted before a governmental body releases information pursuant to section 58.007(e). *Id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Thus, we will determine whether the submitted information is otherwise excepted from release under the Act.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information made confidential by section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in relevant part, as follows:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act], 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 [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.

Id. § 261.201(a). The submitted information consists of information used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect under chapter 261 of the Family Code. Accordingly, the submitted information falls within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for the purposes of this section as a 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), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). We have no indication the sheriff’s office has adopted a rule governing the release of this type of information. Accordingly, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, and based on our review, we conclude the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code, and the sheriff’s office must withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis.¹

In summary, if the requestor is not a parent or guardian of one of the juvenile offenders, then the sheriff’s office must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. If the requestor is a parent or guardian of one of the juvenile offenders, then the sheriff’s office must

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

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, 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,



Kristi L. Wilkins
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KLW/tch

Ref: ID# 526418

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)