



February 9, 2015

Mr. Vance Hinds
Assistant Ellis County & District Attorney
Ellis County
109 South Jackson
Waxahachie, Texas 75165

OR2015-02530

Dear Mr. Hinds:

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# 552995.

The Ellis County & District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") received a request for all search warrants and affidavits, inventory of items seized, law enforcement reports, laboratory results, confidential informant interviews, copies of recorded telephone calls, and defendant and all witness statements pertaining to a specified case. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 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, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides as follows:

(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 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). The requested information consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. *See id.* § 261.001 (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, the information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated the district attorney’s office has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute). Accordingly, the district attorney’s office must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.¹

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,



Daniel Olds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DO/akg

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your remaining arguments to withhold this information.

Ref: ID# 552995

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)