



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 21, 2015

Ms. Ana Vieira Ayala  
Senior Attorney & Public Information Coordinator  
Office of General Counsel  
The University of Texas System  
201 West Seventh Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2902

OR2015-26834

Dear Ms. Ayala:

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# 591432 (OGC# 164926).

The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (the "university") received a request for any audio recording of the requestor's voice which was allegedly made on or around a specified date. 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.

Initially, we note some of the submitted audio recordings are not responsive to the instant request for information because they do not consist of recordings of the requestor's voice and were not made on or around the specified date. This ruling does not address the public availability of the non-responsive information, which we have indicated, and that information need not be released in response to this request.

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 information protected by other statutes, such as section 51.971 of the Education Code, which provides, in pertinent part:

(a) In this section:

(1) “Compliance program” means a process to assess and ensure compliance by the officers and employees of an institution of higher education with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies, including matters of:

(A) ethics and standards of conduct;

(B) financial reporting;

(C) internal accounting controls; or

(D) auditing.

(2) “Institution of higher education” has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

...

(c) The following are confidential:

(1) information that directly or indirectly reveals the identity of an individual who made a report to the compliance program office of an institution of higher education, sought guidance from the office, or participated in an investigation conducted under the compliance program[.]

...

(d) Subsection (c) does not apply to information related to an individual who consents to disclosure of the information.

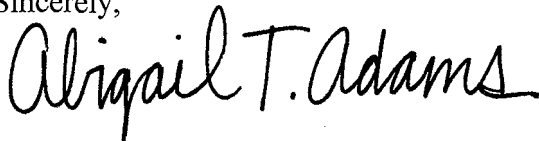
Educ. Code § 51.971(a), (c)(1), (d). You inform us the university is an institution of higher education for purposes of section 61.003 of the Education Code. *See id.* § 51.971(a)(2). You state the information at issue pertains to a completed investigation undertaken by the university’s Department of Internal Investigations and the allegations were found to be substantiated. You state the investigation was conducted in response to allegations against a university employee and was initiated in order to assess and ensure compliance with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies. Based on your representations, we find this information relates to an investigation conducted under the university’s compliance program. *See id.* § 51.971(a)(1).

You seek to withhold the information at issue in its entirety. You claim, and have provided a statement from the investigator of the allegations at issue stating, only a small subset of individuals were involved in the investigation, and the requestor is familiar with this small group of individuals. This statement further explains the requestor has specific knowledge of the events at issue and the employees involved. Accordingly, you assert release of the information at issue would directly or indirectly identify the individuals seeking guidance from or participating in the compliance program investigation. You state none of the individuals involved have consented to the disclosure of their identifying information. *See id.* § 51.971(d). Upon review, we agree release of this information would directly or indirectly identify individuals as participants in the compliance program investigation. *See id.* § 51.971(c). Accordingly, the university must withhold the responsive information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 51.971(c)(1) of the Education 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](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,



Abigail T. Adams  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

ATA/akg

Ref: ID# 591432

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)