



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 26, 2017

Ms. Kristen Lee  
Assistant County Attorney  
Harris County  
1019 Congress, 15th Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2017-08796

Dear Ms. Lee:

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# 655845 (File No. 17PIA0083).

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (the "institute") received a request for the autopsy report of a named individual.<sup>1</sup> You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim.

We must address the institute's obligations under the Act. Section 552.301 of the Government Code prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body is required to submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *Id.* § 552.301(e). In this instance, you state the institute received the request for information on February 6, 2017. As of the date of this letter, you have not submitted for our review written

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<sup>1</sup>As you have not submitted the request for information, we take our description from your brief.


comments stating the reasons why the claimed exceptions apply, a copy of the written request for information, or a copy or representative sample of the information requested. Consequently, we find the institute failed to comply with the requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342, 350 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). Although the institute raises an exception to disclosure, because you have not submitted the requested information for our review, we have no basis for finding any of the information excepted from disclosure. Thus, we have no choice but to order the requested information released pursuant to section 552.302.

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,



Ashley Crutchfield  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

AC/bw

Ref: ID# 655845

c: Requestor