



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 2, 2017

Mr. Cedrick Collier
Public Information Officer
Harris County Sheriff's Office
1200 Baker Street, 2nd Floor
Houston, Texas 77002-1206

OR2017-17314

Dear Mr. Collier:

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# 675774 (File No. 17SO8001448).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public 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 provides in relevant part as follows:

(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:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, or other law.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c), (e), (j)(2). Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007(c). Section 58.007 allows the review or copy of juvenile law enforcement records by a child's parent or guardian. *Id.* § 58.007(e). The submitted documents involve 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 person ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age when conduct occurred), .03(a), (b) (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct indicating a need for supervision" for purposes of section 58.007). Therefore, the submitted information is confidential under section 58.007(c). However, the requestor is a parent of the juvenile offender and, therefore, the information pertaining to the requestor's child may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that ground. *See id.* § 58.007(e). Further, section 58.007(j) provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must also be redacted. *See id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Accordingly, we will address your claim under section 552.108 of the Government Code.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection,

investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information relates to a pending criminal case. Based on your representation, we find the sheriff’s office has demonstrated the release of the submitted information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Accordingly, with the exception of the basic information, the sheriff’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government 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,



Britni Ramirez
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BR/tdw

¹We note the requestor has a right of access to the information being released. Thus, the sheriff’s office must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.

Ref: ID# 675774

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)