



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 3, 2017

Mr. William T. Little
Assistant County & District Attorney
Ellis County
109 South Jackson Street
Waxahachie, Texas 75165

OR2017-17494

Dear Mr. Little:

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# 669396.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified report. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the sheriff's office claims 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. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in part, 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). Upon review, the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See id.* §§ 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. We have no indication the sheriff’s office has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, 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.¹ *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

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,


Rahat Huq
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RSH/tdw

Ref: ID# 669396

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the sheriff’s office’s remaining arguments against disclosure.