



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 27, 2017

Mr. J. R. Harris
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County Attorney
1019 Congress, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2017-22191

Dear Mr. Harris:

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# 678115 (C.A. File No. 17PIA0407).

The Harris County Office of Court Management (the "county") received a request for specified information pertaining to individuals arrested on misdemeanor charges who were released on personal bond during a specified time period. You claim the submitted information is either not subject to the Act or excepted from disclosure under section 552.103 of the Government Code. We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

You assert the submitted information is not subject to the Act because it consists of judicial records. The Act is applicable only to "public information." *See* Gov't Code § 552.021. Section 552.002(a) of the Government Code defines "public information" as follows:

¹We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

[I]nformation that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained under a law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business:

- (1) by a governmental body;
- (2) for a governmental body and the governmental body:
 - (A) owns the information;
 - (B) has a right of access to the information; or
 - (C) spends or contributes public money for the purpose of writing, producing, collecting, assembling, or maintaining the information; or
- (3) by an individual officer or employee of a governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity and the information pertains to official business of the governmental body.

Id. § 552.002(a). However, section 552.003 provides that, for purposes of the Act, the term “governmental body” does not include the judiciary. *Id.* § 552.003(1)(B). Information that is “collected, assembled, or maintained by or for the judiciary is governed by rules adopted by the Supreme Court of Texas or by other applicable laws and rules” and is not subject to the Act. *See id.* § 552.0035(a); *cf.* Open Records Decision No. 131 (1976) (applying statutory predecessor to judiciary exclusion under section 552.003(1)(B) prior to enactment of section 552.0035).

In determining whether information held by a governmental body falls within the judiciary exception to the Act, this office looks to whether the governmental body maintains the relevant records as an agent of the judiciary in a judicial, as opposed to an administrative, capacity. *See* Open Records Decision No. 646 at 3-4 (1996). This office has determined a community supervision and corrections department is a governmental body for purposes of the Act, and its administrative records, such as personnel files and other records reflecting day-to-day management of the department, are subject to the Act. *Id.* at 5. In contrast, specific records held by a community supervision and corrections department that concern individuals who are subject to the direct supervision of a court are not subject to the Act because such records are held on behalf of the judiciary. *Id.*

You state the submitted information consists of criminal records the office maintains on behalf of the judiciary. You further state you only have access to the information at issue as an agent of the judiciary. Thus, we find the information at issue is a judicial record maintained by the office as an agent of the judiciary. Accordingly, we conclude the

submitted information is not subject to the Act and need not be released in response to this request for information.²

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,



Emily Buchanan
Attorney
Open Records Division

EB/eb

Ref: ID# 678115

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

²As we are able to make this determination, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of the submitted information.