



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 5, 2017

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

OR2017-22785

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# 681198 (HCSO File No. 17SO6001452).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for a specified police report.¹ 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.

Next, we note some of the submitted information is not responsive to the request for information because it does not relate to the requested police report. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the sheriff's office is not required to release this information in response to this request.

¹We note the sheriff's office received an initial request for the same information from this requestor on July 28, 2017. In response to the initial request, the sheriff's office informs us it responded to the requestor within five business days, and withheld certain information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code, pursuant to the previous determination this office issued to the sheriff's office in Open Records Letter No. 2016-10124 (2016). Subsequently, the requestor made an additional request for the same information on August 4, 2017.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code exempts from public disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”² Gov’t Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by 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). We note the responsive information reflects it was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect conducted by the sheriff’s office. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section as person under 18 years of age who is not and has not been married or who has not had the disabilities of minority removed for general purposes), 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. You do not indicate 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 sheriff’s office must withhold the responsive information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.³ *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

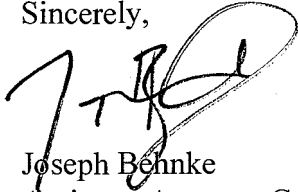
This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

²The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480(1987), 470 (1987).

³As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of the responsive information.

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,



Joseph Behnke
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/gw

Ref: ID# 681198

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)