



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 31, 2018

Mr. Ricardo Vela, Jr.
Assistant District Attorney
Dallas County
133 North Riverfront Boulevard, LB19
Dallas, Texas 75207-4399

OR2018-02172

Dear Mr. Vela:

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# 700159.

The Dallas County District Attorney's Office (the "district attorney's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case. We understand the district attorney's office will withhold certain information under section 552.147(b) of the Government Code.¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.107, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.132 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022(a) provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

¹Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a governmental body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Gov't Code 552.147(b).

(1) a completed report, audit, evaluation, or investigation made of, for, or by a governmental body, except as provided by Section 552.108[.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(1). The submitted information consists of a completed investigation that is subject to section 552.022(a)(1). The district attorney's office must release the completed investigation pursuant to section 552.022(a)(1) unless it is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code or is made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* § 552.022(a)(1). The district attorney's office seeks to withhold the submitted information under section 552.107. However, section 552.107 is discretionary in nature and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 676 at 10-11 (2002) (attorney-client privilege under Gov't Code § 552.107(1) may be waived), 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions).* Therefore, the district attorney's office may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.107 of the Government Code. The Texas Supreme Court has held the Texas Rules of Evidence are "other law" within the meaning of section 552.022. *See In re City of Georgetown*, 53 S.W.3d 328, 336 (Tex. 2001). We will therefore consider the district attorney's office's assertion of the attorney-client privilege under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. As information subject to section 552.022(a)(1) may be withheld under section 552.108 of the Government Code, we will consider the district attorney's office's argument under section 552.108 for the information at issue. Further, because sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.132 of the Government Code make information confidential under the Act, we will consider the applicability of these exceptions to 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. Section 552.101 encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code. Section 261.201 provides, in relevant part, as follows:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] 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.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law;[.]

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2)-(3). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation by the district attorney's office of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 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 section 261.201 of the Family Code. However, we note the requestor is a legal representative of child victim listed in the information and is not alleged to have committed the suspected abuse or neglect. Thus, pursuant to section 261.201(k), the information at issue may not be withheld from this requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.201(k). However, section 261.201(l)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Accordingly, we will consider your remaining arguments against the disclosure of the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. *See* Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the requested information relates to a criminal investigation that concluded in a final result other than a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must provide comments explaining why exceptions raised should apply

to information requested) You state the submitted information pertains to a criminal investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Based on this representation and our review, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. *Id.* § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the basic “front-page” offense and arrest information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). See Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the district attorney’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.²

You seek to withhold the basic information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. Section 552.101 also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. As previously noted, the requestor is a legal representative of the victim listed in the report. See Gov’t Code § 552.023(a) (“person’s authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests”); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself). Thus, the requestor has a right of access to information pertaining to her client that would otherwise be confidential under common-law privacy and it may not be withheld from her under section 552.101 on that basis.

In summary, with exception of the basic information, the district attorney’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.³

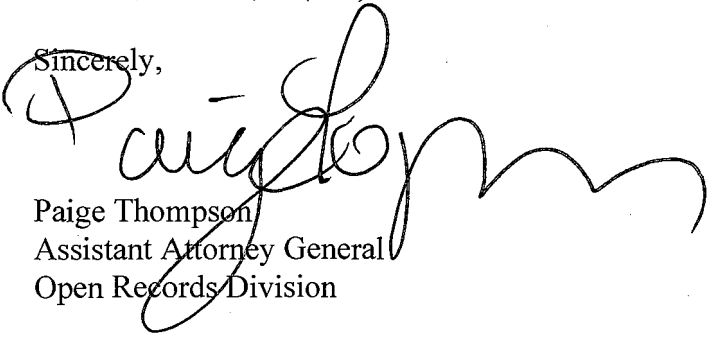
²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

³In this instance, the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released pursuant to section 261.201(k) of the Family Code. The district attorney’s office should again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for this information from a different requestor. See Fam. Code § 261.201(k); Gov’t Code §§ 552.301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001).

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,



Paige Thompson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PT/eb

Ref: ID# 700159

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)