



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 27, 2020

Mr. Ricardo Vela, Jr.  
Assistant District Attorney  
Dallas County  
133 North Riverfront Boulevard, LB-19  
Dallas, Texas 75207-4399

OR2020-11872

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# 824214.

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

Initially, we note the submitted information includes a grand jury indictment. The judiciary is expressly excluded from the requirements of the Act. Gov't Code § 552.003(1)(B). This office has determined for purposes of the Act, a grand jury is a part of the judiciary and therefore not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decision No. 411 (1984). Further, records kept by a governmental body that is acting as an agent for a grand jury are considered records in the constructive possession of the grand jury, and are also not subject to the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 513 (1988), 411, 398 (1983). The fact that information collected or prepared by another person or entity is submitted to the grand jury does not necessarily mean such information is in the grand jury's constructive possession when the same information also is held in the other person's or entity's own capacity. Information held by another person or entity but not produced at the direction of the grand jury may well be protected under one of the Act's specific exceptions to disclosure, but such information is not excluded from the reach of the Act by the judiciary exclusion. *See* ORD 513. Thus, to the extent the district attorney's office holds the information at issue solely as an agent of the grand jury, such information consists of records of the judiciary that are not subject to disclosure under the Act, and the district attorney's office is not

required to release that information in response to the instant request.<sup>1</sup> To the extent the district attorney's office holds the information at issue in its own capacity and not solely as an agent of the grand jury, we will address the claimed exceptions.

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, which 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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). You state the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. *See id.* §§ 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 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). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. You do not indicate the district attorney's office has adopted a rule that governs the release of the type of information and therefore, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the district attorney's office must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.<sup>2</sup> *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

In summary, to the extent the district attorney's office holds the indictment solely as an agent of the grand jury, such information consists of records of the judiciary that are not subject to disclosure under the Act, and the district attorney's office is not required to release that information in response to the instant request. The district attorney's office must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

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<sup>1</sup> As our ruling is dispositive in this instance, we need not address the arguments against disclosure of this information.

<sup>2</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against disclosure of the submitted information.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Kimbell Kesling  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KK/rm

Ref: ID# 824214

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)