



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 30, 2022

Mr. Michael Guerrero
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2022-18975

Dear Mr. Guerrero:

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# 956724 (Ref. No. 0590-04-2022).

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident involving a named inmate. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, and 552.134 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Section 552.134 of the Government Code relates to information about inmates of the department. This exception provides, in relevant part:

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) or by Section 552.029 [of the Government Code], information obtained or maintained by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the department.

Gov't Code § 552.134(a). Section 552.029 of the Government Code provides, in part:

¹ We assume that 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 that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Notwithstanding Section . . . 552.134, the following information about an inmate who is confined in a facility operated by or under a contract with the [department] is subject to required disclosure under Section 552.021:

. . .

(8) basic information regarding the death of an inmate in custody, an incident involving the use of force, or an alleged crime involving the inmate.

Id. § 552.029(8). Thus, section 552.134 is explicitly made subject to section 552.029. You state the submitted information pertains to an inmate who was confined in a facility operated by the department. Upon review, we agree the submitted information is subject to section 552.134 of the Government Code. Although you assert section 552.029 of the Government Code does not apply to the submitted information, we find the submitted information pertains to the death of an inmate in custody. Thus, the department must release basic information about the death of an inmate in custody pursuant to section 552.029. The basic information that must be released includes the time and place of the incident, the names of inmates and of department employees who were involved, a brief narrative of the incident, a brief description of any injuries sustained by anyone involved, and information regarding any criminal charges or disciplinary actions that were filed as a result of the incident. Accordingly, except for basic information under section 552.029(8) of the Government Code, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.134 of the Government Code.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 <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,

Meredith L. Coffman
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MLC/jxd

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information, except to note basic information is generally not excepted from public disclosure under section 552.103. *See* Open Records Decision No. 597 (1991).

Ref: ID# 956724

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)