

Juvenile Law Case Summaries

By
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Juvenile offense report sent to Crime Victims' Compensation Program is not a public record [ORD2001-1373] (01-3-29)

On April 5, 2001, the Attorney General ruled that an offense report in which the subject is a juvenile that was sent by a police department to the Crime Victims' Compensation Program of the Attorney General's Office remains confidential under Family Code Section 58.007.

01-3-29. Attorney General Open Record Opinion No. OR2001-1373 (4/5/01)[Texas Juvenile Law (5th Edition 2000)].

Ms. Amanda Crawford
Assistant Attorney General
Public Information Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
P.O. Box 12548
Austin, Texas 78711-2548

Dear Ms. Crawford:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID # 145860.

The Office of the Attorney General (the "OAG") received a request for information about a specified crime victim's case, including police reports, social history information, and other pertinent data. You state that responsive information that you do not claim to be excepted from disclosure will be released to the requestor. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

You contend that Exhibit B is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. Section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by statute. Section 261.201(a) of the Family Code provides that:

(a) The 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.

You explain that the offense report in Exhibit B was forwarded to the OAG Crime Victims' Compensation Program ("CVC") by the Grand Prairie Police Department. See Crim. Proc. Code art. 56.38(d) (providing that upon request of OAG a law enforcement agency shall release to the OAG all reports for purposes of the CVC). [FN1] After reviewing

the submitted offense report, we find that the information consists of an incident report used or developed in an investigation made under chapter 261 of the Family Code. You have provided a letter from the City of Grand Prairie which states that it is not its policy to release this type of information. Therefore, we conclude that the offense report in Exhibit B is confidential under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute). Accordingly, the OAG must withhold the offense report in Exhibit B.

[FN1]. Information may generally be transferred between governmental bodies without waiving exceptions to the public disclosure of that information or affecting its confidentiality. See Attorney General Opinion JM-590 (1986); Open Records Decision Nos. 655 (1997), 567 (1990), 561 (1990), 516 (1989).

You also assert that offense reports in Exhibits C and D are excepted under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.007 of the Family Code. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997 are confidential under section 58.007. The relevant language of section 58.007(c) reads as follows:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

- (1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;
- (2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from controls to access electronic data concerning adults; and
- (3) maintained on a local basis only and not sent to a central state or federal depository, except as provided by Subchapter B.

You state that the submitted offense reports were forwarded to the CVC by the Grand Prairie Police Department. The information at issue involves juvenile conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. Further, it does not appear that any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply. Therefore, we agree that the OAG must withhold the offense reports in Exhibits C and D under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

[Balance of letter dealing with disclosure and appeal procedures is omitted.]

Sincerely,

Jennifer H. Bialek
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

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