



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 17, 2015

Ms. Monica L. Perez
Counsel for the City of Socorro
Mounce, Green, Myers, Safi, Paxson & Galatzan, P.C.
P.O. Box 1977
El Paso, Texas 79999-1977

OR2015-05112

Dear Ms. Perez:

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# 556604.

The City of Socorro (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.103, 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed 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, which provides, in part, the following:

(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). Upon review, we find the submitted information relates to an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect conducted by the city's police department. *See id.* § 261.001 (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of chapter 261). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. You do not indicate the city's police department 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 submitted information is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).*

In this instance, however, the requestor is a representative of the Socorro Independent School District (the "district"). Section 261.201 provides that information encompassed by section 261.201(a) may be disclosed "for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law." Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Section 22.083 of the Education Code authorizes a school district to obtain criminal history record information ("CHRI") related to an employee of the district from a law enforcement agency. *See Educ. Code § 22.083(a)(1), (a-1)(2).* Thus, the district may have a right of access to CHRI pursuant to section 22.083. CHRI consists of "information collected about a person by a criminal justice agency that consists of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions." Gov't Code § 411.082(2); *see id.* §§ 411.097(b) (school district is entitled to obtain CHRI related to district employee that district is required or authorized to obtain under Educ. Code ch. 22 subch. C from Texas Department of Public Safety (the "DPS")), .087(a)(2) (agency entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS also is authorized to "obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state [CHRI] maintained by that [agency].") *Cf. Brookshire v. Houston Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 508 S.W.2d 675, 678-79 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1974, no writ) (when legislature defines term in one statute and uses same term in relation to same subject matter in latter statute, later use of term is same as previously defined).

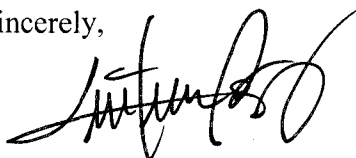
We understand the requestor seeks access to information related to an employee of the district. Therefore, if the city determines the release of CHRI would be for a purpose consistent with the Family Code, then the city must release information from the submitted records to this requestor that shows the type of allegation made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions. *See Open Records Decision No. 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exceptions to disclosure under the Act).* In that event, the city must withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in

conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. But if the city determines the release of CHRI would not be for a purpose consistent with the Family Code, then the city must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. *See* Attorney General Opinions DM-353 at 4 n.6 (1995) (interagency transfer of information prohibited where confidentiality statute enumerates specific entities to which release of information is authorized, and potential receiving governmental body is not among statute's enumerated entities), JM-590 at 4-5 (1986); Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g), (k) (listing entities authorized to receive section 261.201 information).¹

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,



Cristian Rosas-Grillet
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CRG/cbz

Ref: ID# 556604

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.