



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 10, 2015

Mr. Jeffrey L. Moore
Counsel for the City of Forney
Brown & Hofmeister, L.L.P.
740 East Campbell Road, Suite 800
Richardson, Texas 75081

OR2015-11363

Dear Mr. Moore:

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# 566735.

The Forney Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for all calls for service reports at a specific address for a specified time period. The department states it will release some information. The department claims portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions the department claims and reviewed the submitted information.

We note the requestor is a representative of a child-placing agency that is licensed by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services ("DFPS") in accordance with chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code, and the address for which she requested information belongs to prospective foster parents. *See generally* Hum. Res. Code ch. 42. Pursuant to rules promulgated by DFPS under chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code, child-placing agencies are required to complete a foster home screening prior to verifying a foster home. *See* Hum. Res. Code § 42.042(a), (e), (f)-(g) (DFPS shall make rules to carry out provisions of chapter 42, including minimum standards for child-placing agencies, child-care services, licensed child-care facilities, and registered family homes). As part of the screening, the agency must obtain certain information as set forth at section 749.2447 of Title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. 40 T.A.C. §§ 749.2445(c)(1), .2471(1); *cf.* Hum. Res. Code

§ 42.0561 (providing in part that “[b]efore . . . a child-placing agency may issue a verification certificate for an agency foster home, the . . . child-placing agency must obtain information relating to each family violence report at the applicant’s residence to which a law enforcement agency responded during the 12 months preceding the date of the application. The applicant shall provide the information on a form prescribed by the department.”). Section 749.2447(7) provides a child-placing agency must obtain, document, and assess, in part, the following information about a prospective foster home:

The results of criminal history and central registry background checks conducted on the prospective foster parents[.] . . . With respect to law enforcement service call information, [the child-placing agency] *must do the following*:

(A) *Obtain service call information from the appropriate law enforcement agency for the prospective foster parents’ addresses for the past two years. Discuss with the prospective foster parents any service call information that [the child-placing agency] obtain[s] from a law enforcement agency and the facts surrounding the incident.*

...

(C) *Assess and document information obtained from law enforcement and any discussion with the prospective foster parents in the foster home screening.*

40 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(A), (C) (emphasis added); *see id.* § 749.2445(a); *see also id.* §§ 745.21(8) (defining “child-placing agency”), (32) (defining “permit”), (33) (defining “permit holder”), 749.41(1) (defining “you” as applicant or permit holder), .43 (words and terms in chapter 749 have meanings assigned under section 745.21). Thus, section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code requires a child-placing agency to obtain all service call information for a two year period for service calls to the addresses of prospective foster parents from appropriate law enforcement agencies. *See id.* § 749.2447(7)(A), (C). Accordingly, we find a child-placing agency licensed by DFPS under chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code has a right of access to this information under section 749.2447(7) when it is obtained for the purpose of verifying a prospective foster home pursuant to the requirements of section 749.2445.

In this instance, the requestor is seeking information pertaining to calls for service involving prospective foster parents at their residence for the previous two years. Accordingly, we conclude the requestor has a right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. We note a specific statutory right of access overcomes general exceptions to disclosure in the Act and the common law. *See Collins v. Tex Mall, L.P.*, 297 S.W.3d 409, 415 (Tex. App.—Fort

Worth 2009, no pet.) (statutory provision controls and preempts common law only when statute directly conflicts with common-law principle); Open Records Decision Nos. 623 at 3 (1994) (exceptions in the Act generally inapplicable to information that statutes expressly make public), 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge in statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exceptions to disclosure under the Act). Accordingly, the department may not withhold any of the submitted information on the basis of common-law privacy. Nevertheless, we must address the department's remaining arguments under sections 552.101 and 552.130 of the Government Code.

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. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997, are confidential under section 58.007(c) of the Family Code, which 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 Subchapters B, D, and E.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). For purposes of section 58.007(c), "child" means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age at the time of the reported conduct. *See id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we find the department has failed to demonstrate how report number 201415252 identifies a juvenile as a suspect or offender for purposes of section 58.007(c). Therefore, report number 201415252 is not confidential pursuant to section 58.007 of the Family Code. However, we agree the remaining information the department has marked involves juvenile delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision that occurred after September 1, 1997. *See id.* § 51.03 (defining "delinquent conduct" and "conduct indicating a need for supervision" for purposes of Fam. Code § 58.007). It does not appear any of the exceptions in section 58.007 apply. Therefore, the

remaining information the department has marked is generally confidential under section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.

As noted above, however, the requestor has a right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. Therefore, we must address the conflict between the access provided under section 749.2447 and the confidentiality provided under section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. Where information falls within both a general and a specific statutory provision, the specific provision prevails over the general statute. *See* Gov't Code § 311.026 (where general statutory provision conflicts with specific provision, specific provision prevails as exception to general provision unless general provision is later enactment and manifest intent is that general provision prevails); *Cuellar v. State*, 521 S.W.2d 277 (Tex. Crim. App.1975) (under well-established rule of statutory construction, specific statutory provisions prevail over general ones). While section 58.007(c) generally makes juvenile law enforcement records confidential with respect to the general public, section 749.2447(7) requires release of information for a specified address and time period to a specified type of requestor in a certain circumstance—a child-placing agency verifying a foster home at that address. *See* Fam. Code § 58.007(c); 40 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7). Thus, the statutory right of access granted to the requestor by section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code prevails over the more general confidentiality provision of section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. Consequently, the department may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. *See* Gov't Code § 552.130. Upon review, the motor vehicle record information the department has marked, and the additional motor vehicle record information we have marked, are generally confidential under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

However, as previously noted, the requestor has a statutory right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. As noted above, a statutory right of access generally prevails over the Act's general exceptions to disclosure. *See* ORDs 613 at 4, 451 at 4. We conclude, however, because section 552.130 of the Government Code has its own access provisions, section 552.130 is not a general exception under the Act. Therefore, we must address the conflict between the access provided under section 749.2447(7) and the confidentiality provided under section 552.130 of the Government Code. Where information falls within both a general and specific provision of law, the specific provision prevails over the general. *See* Gov't Code § 311.026 ; *Cuellar*, 521 S.W.2d at 277. Although section 749.2447(7) generally allows a child-placing agency access to service call information, section 552.130 specifically protects motor vehicle record information. Thus, we find the confidentiality provided by

section 552.130 is more specific than the right of access provided by section 749.2447(7). Accordingly, we conclude, notwithstanding the statutory right of access granted to the requestor by section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information it has marked, and the additional motor vehicle record information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, the department must withhold the motor vehicle record information it has marked, and the additional motor vehicle record information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information to the requestor pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code.

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,



Rahat Huq
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RSH/dls

Ref: ID# 566735

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)