



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 21, 2017

Mr. Oscar G. Gabaldón, Jr.
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of El Paso
P.O. Box 1890
El Paso, Texas 79950-1890

OR2017-03760

Dear Mr. Gabaldón:

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# 646463 (ORR# 16-1026-8023).

The City of El Paso (the "city") received a request for two specified incident reports involving a named individual. You state the city will release some of the requested information. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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 of the Government Code encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with [the Family 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.

Id. § 261.201(a). Upon review, we find the submitted information consists of information used or developed in an investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect under chapter 261. Accordingly, we find the submitted information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of Family Code ch. 261); *see also id.* § 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). You do not indicate the city’s police department has adopted a rule governing the release of this type of information; therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, we find the submitted information is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code.

However, we note the requestor is a recruiter for the United States Army (the “Army”), and the named individual is a potential enlistee in the Army. The United States Department of Defense (the “DoD”) is authorized to perform background investigations of persons seeking to enlist to determine the eligibility of applicants for acceptance into armed services. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 9101(b)(1)(A)(iii); *see also id.* § 9101(a)(6)(A) (DoD is a covered agency for purposes of section 9101). The Army has a right to the criminal history record information (“CHRI”) of state and local criminal justice agencies when its investigation is conducted with the consent of the individual being investigated. *See id.* § 9101(b)(1), (c); *see also* 10 U.S.C. § 111(b)(6) (DoD includes the Department of the Army). CHRI is defined as “information collected by criminal justice agencies on individuals consisting of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, indictments, informations, or other formal criminal charges, and any disposition arising therefrom, sentencing, correction supervision and release” but does not include “identification information such as fingerprint records to the extent that such information does not indicate involvement in the criminal justice system” or “records of a State or locality sealed pursuant to law from access by State and local criminal justice agencies of that State or locality.” 5 U.S.C. § 9101(a)(2).

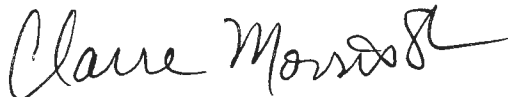
Federal law provides the Army’s right of access to CHRI preempts state confidentiality provisions. *Id.* § 9101(b)(4) (section 9101 “shall apply notwithstanding any other provision of law . . . of any State”). We conclude the Army’s right of access under federal law preempts section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See English v. General Elec. Co.*, 496 U.S. 72, 79 (1990) (noting state law is preempted to extent it actually conflicts with federal law); *see also La. Pub. Serv. Comm’n v. FCC*, 476 U.S. 355, 369 (1986) (noting federal agency acting within scope of its congressionally delegated authority may preempt state regulation). However, federal law also provides the Army’s right of access is contingent on receiving written consent from the individual under investigation for the release of such CHRI. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 9101(c), (b)(1)(A)(iii). In this instance, because the individual at issue has given the Army written consent for the release of the information at issue, the city must release CHRI from the submitted information to this requestor. The city must withhold

the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/som

Ref: ID# 646463

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹We note the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released in this instance. Because such information is confidential with respect to the general public, if the city receives another request for this information from a different requestor, then the city should again seek a ruling from this office.