



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 9, 2017

Mr. Vince Hinds
Assistant County & District Attorney
Ellis County
109 South Jackson
Waxahachie, Texas 75165

OR2017-12766

Dear Mr. Hinds:

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# 661478.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Department (the "sheriff's department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.130, and 552.147 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

We note some of the information you have submitted is not responsive to the request because it does not relate to the specified incident. This ruling does not address the public availability of any information that is not responsive to the request, and the sheriff's department is not required to release such information in response to this request.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts "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 information protected by other statutes, such as section 411.083 of the Government Code, which pertains to criminal history

¹Although you also raise section 552.101 in conjunction with constitutional privacy for the submitted information, you provide no arguments explaining how this doctrine is applicable to the information at issue. Therefore, we assume you no longer assert this doctrine. See Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302.

record information (“CHRI”). CHRI generated by the National Crime Information Center (“NCIC”) or by the Texas Crime Information Center is confidential under federal and state law. CHRI means “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.” *Id.* § 411.082(2). Title 28, part 20 of the Code of Federal Regulations governs the release of CHRI obtained from the NCIC network or other states. *See* 28 C.F.R. § 20.21. The federal regulations allow each state to follow its individual law with respect to CHRI it generates. Open Records Decision No. 565 at 7 (1990); *see generally* Gov’t Code ch. 411 subch. F. Section 411.083 of the Government Code deems confidential CHRI the Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) maintains, except DPS may disseminate this information as provided in chapter 411, subchapter F, or subchapter E-1, of the Government Code. *See* Gov’t Code § 411.083. Sections 411.083(b)(1) and 411.089(a) authorize a criminal justice agency to obtain CHRI; however, a criminal justice agency may not release CHRI except to another criminal justice agency for a criminal justice purpose. *Id.* § 411.089(b)(1). Thus, any CHRI obtained from DPS or any other criminal justice agency must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with Government Code chapter 411. We note, however, active warrant information or other information relating to an individual’s current involvement in the criminal justice system does not constitute criminal history information for purposes of section 552.101. *See id.* § 411.081(b). You assert section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code for some of the submitted information. Upon review, we find the information you marked consists of CHRI which the sheriff’s department must withhold under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law.²

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 611.002 of the Health and Safety Code. Section 611.002 applies to “[c]ommunications between a patient and a professional, [and] records of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient that are created or maintained by a professional.” Health & Safety Code § 611.002; *see also id.* § 611.001 (defining “patient” and “professional”). Upon review, we find you have not demonstrated any portion of the information at issue consists of a mental health record for purposes of chapter 611 of the Health and Safety Code. Accordingly, the sheriff’s department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code on that basis.

Additionally, section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses section 560.003 of the Government Code, which provides, “[a] biometric identifier in the possession of a governmental body is exempt from disclosure under [the Act].” Gov’t Code § 560.003; *see id.* § 560.001(1) (“biometric identifier” means retina or iris scan, fingerprint, voiceprint, or record of hand or face geometry). There is no indication the requestor has a right of access

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

to the submitted fingerprints under section 560.002. *See id.* § 560.002(1)(A) (governmental body may not sell, lease, or otherwise disclose individual's biometric identifier to another person unless the individual consents to disclosure). Accordingly, the sheriff's department must withhold the submitted fingerprints, which you marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 560.003 of the Government Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). The court of appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.).

Upon review, we find the sheriff's department must withhold the public citizens' dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we find the remaining information is either not highly intimate or embarrassing or is of legitimate public interest. Accordingly, the sheriff's department may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of common-law privacy.

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(a). We note section 552.130 protects privacy interests. Accordingly, the requestor has a right of access to his own motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.023 of the Government Code and it may not be withheld from him. *See id.* § 552.023(a) ("person or a person's authorized representative has special right of access, beyond right of general public, to information held by governmental body that relates to person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person's privacy interests"); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning herself). Thus, except for the information we marked for release, the sheriff's department must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked, and the additional information we marked to withhold, under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Section 552.147 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure the social security number of a living person. Gov't Code § 552.147. Upon review, we agree the sheriff's department

may withhold the social security numbers you marked under section 552.147 of the Government Code.

In summary, the sheriff's department must withhold the information you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 411.083 of the Government Code and federal law. The department must withhold the submitted fingerprints, which you marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 560.003 of the Government Code. The sheriff's department must withhold the public citizens' dates of birth you marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. With the exception of the information we marked for release, the sheriff's department must withhold the motor vehicle record information you marked, and the additional information we marked to withhold, under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The sheriff's department may withhold the social security numbers you marked under section 552.147 of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.³

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,



Emily Kunst
Attorney
Open Records Division

EK/eb

³We note the requestor has a right of access to some of the information being released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023(b) (a governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates or person's agent on ground that information is considered confidential by privacy principles); ORD 481 at 4. Thus, the sheriff's department must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.

Ref: ID# 661478

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)