



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 25, 2017

Ms. Lynn M. Winter
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
200 Texas Street, 3RD Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-6311

OR2017-21926

Dear Ms. Winter:

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# 679820 (Fort Worth PIR No. W063814).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for all records pertaining to a specified address over a specified time period. You state you have released some information to the requestor. 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 public 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 information protected by section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in part, as follows:

(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.

Id. § 261.201(a). Upon review, we find the submitted information relates to an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse conducted by the city's police department. *See id.* § 261.001(1) (defining "abuse" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of this section). Accordingly, we find such information is within the scope of section 261.201(a). Thus, this information is generally confidential under section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

However, the submitted documentation reveals 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. 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 [DFPS]."). 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[.]

(B) With respect to law enforcement service call information, [the child-placing agency] *must do the following:*

(i) *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.*

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

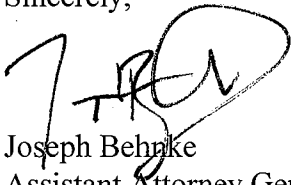
40 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(B)(i), (iii) (emphasis added); *see id.* § 749.2445(a); *see id.* §§ 745.21(8) (defining “child-placing agency”), (29) (defining “permit”), (30) (defining “permit holder”), 749.41(1) (defining “you” as applicant or permit holder), .43 (words and terms in chapter 749 have meanings 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). 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.

Although the requestor may generally have a right of access to some of the requested information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code, we note the submitted information falls outside of the two year period to which section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code grants access. *See id.* § 749.2447(7)(A), (C). Therefore, the requestor does not have a right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. Accordingly, the city must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family 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,



Joseph Behrke
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/gw

Ref: ID# 679820

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)