



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 27, 2017

Mr. J.R. Harris
Assistant County Attorney
County of Harris
1019 Congress, Fifteenth Floor
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2017-24561

Dear Mr. Harris:

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# 682257 (C.A. File No. 17PIA0475).

The Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct Five (the "constable's office") received a request for a specified report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 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 58.008 of the Family Code, which provides, in part:

(b) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records concerning a child and information concerning a child that are stored by electronic means or otherwise from which a record could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

(1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult records;

(2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as adult records, accessible only under controls that are separate and distinct from the 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 Subsection (c) or Subchapter B, D, or E.

...

(d) Law enforcement records concerning a child may be inspected or copied by:

(1) a juvenile justice agency, as defined by Section 58.101;

(2) a criminal justice agency, as defined by Section 411.082, Government Code;

(3) the child; or

(4) the child's parent or guardian.

(e) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record concerning the child under Subsection (d), the custodian of the record shall redact:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child; and

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act] or any other law.

Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3173, 3176-77 (Vernon) (to be codified at Fam. Code § 58.008(b), (d), (e); *see* Fam. Code § 51.03(a) (defining "delinquent conduct" for purposes of title 3 of Family Code); Act of May 19, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 324 § 7.002, Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 841, 848 (Vernon) (to be codified as amendments to Fam. Code § 51.03(b)); Act of May 30, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 685 § 21, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3044, 3057 (Vernon) (to be codified as amendments to Fam. Code § 51.03(b)) (defining "conduct indicating a need for supervision"). Section 58.008(b) is applicable to records of juvenile conduct that occurred before, on, or after September 1, 2017. *See* Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3176-77. The juvenile must have been at least 10 years old and less than 17 years of age when the conduct occurred. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2) (defining "child" for purposes

of title 3 of Family Code). We understand you to assert the submitted information is subject to section 58.008(b).¹ Upon review, we agree the submitted information involves a juvenile offender, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). In this instance, the requestor is the parent of the juvenile offender. As such, the requestor has a right to inspect juvenile law enforcement records concerning this juvenile pursuant to section 58.008(d) of the Family Code. *See* Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3177 (to be codified at Fam. Code § 58.008(d)). Section 58.008(e)(2) provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or other law must also be redacted. *See* Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3177 (to be codified at Fam. Code § 58.008(e)(2)). Thus, we will consider your argument under section 552.108 of the Government Code with respect to submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). You state the submitted information pertains to an active criminal investigation. Based on your representation, we conclude the release of the information at issue would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to the submitted information.

However, we note section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to be basic information). Thus, with the exception of the basic information, the constable’s office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.²

We understand you seek to withhold portions of the basic information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(e)(1) of the Family Code. As

¹Although you raise section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) of the Family Code, we note the 85th Legislature repealed this provision effective September 1, 2017. Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 21, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3173, 3187.

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

noted above, section 58.008(e)(1) provides any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the requestor's child must be redacted. *See* Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3177 (to be codified at Fam. Code § 58.008(e)(1)). Upon review, however, no portion of the basic information contains identifying information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness. Thus, the constable's office may not withhold any of the basic information under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.008(e)(1).

In summary, with the exception of the basic information, which must be released, the constable's office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.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,



Meagan J. Conway
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MC/sb

Ref: ID# 682257

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

³The requestor has a right of access to the information at issue. Act of May 28, 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., ch. 746 § 13, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3177 (to be codified at Fam. Code § 58.008(d)). If the constable's office receives another request for this information from a different requestor, the constable's office must again seek a ruling from this office.