



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 19, 2019

Mr. Thomas M. Gilliland
Public Information Officer
Harris County Sheriff's Office
1200 Baker Street, 2nd Floor
Houston, Texas 77002-1206

OR2019-19822

Dear Mr. Gilliland:

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# 775997 ([HCSO File# 19SO6001833]).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information pertaining to a specified case. 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 encompasses section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which provides,

(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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See 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), 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Thus, this information is generally confidential under section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. However, we note section 261.201 (a) provides information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” *Id.* § 261.201(a).

Chapter 411 of the Government Code constitutes “applicable state law” in this instance. The requestor is an enforcement investigator with the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (“TDLR”). Sections 411.093 and 411.122 of the Government Code both provide TDLR is entitled to obtain criminal history record information (“CHRI”) maintained by the Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) that relates to a person who is an applicant for a license issued by TDLR. Gov’t Code §§ 411.093(1), .122(a)(1), .122(d)(10). In addition, section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code provides,

(a) Unless otherwise authorized by Subsection (e), a person, agency, department, political subdivision, or other entity that is authorized by this subchapter or Subchapter E-1 to obtain from [DPS CHRI] maintained by [DPS] that relates to another person is authorized to:

...

(2) obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state [CHRI] maintained by that criminal justice agency that relates to that person.

Id. § 411.087(a)(2). CHRI is defined as “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.” *See id.* § 411.082(2). Thus, when read together, sections 411.087, 411.093, and 411.122 of the Government Code may grant TDLR a right of access to CHRI in the submitted incident report.

The requestor states she is conducting a criminal background check on an individual who has applied for licensure with TDLR. Thus, if the sheriff’s office determines release of the CHRI is consistent with the Family Code, then the sheriff’s office must release the named

individual's CHRI pursuant to sections 411.087, 411.093, and 411.122 of the Government Code, but must withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. However, if the sheriff's office determines release of the CHRI is not consistent with the Family Code, then the sheriff's office must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) 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,



Kelly McWethy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KSM/gw

Ref: ID# 775997

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)