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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 1, 2019

Ms. Tiffany Bull
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City of Grand Prairie
P.O. Box 534045
Grand Prairie, Texas 75053-4045

OR2019-21325

Dear Ms. Bull:

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# 778368 (GPCA# 19-0076).

The Grand Prairie Police Department (the "department") received two requests from different requestors for information pertaining to a specified incident.¹ 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 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 and 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;

¹We note the department sought and received clarification from the first requestor of the information requested. See Gov't Code § 552.222 (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); see also *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-business-day period to request attorney general opinion is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed).

(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.

Fam. Code § 58.008(b); *see also id.* § 51.03(a)-(b) (defining “delinquent conduct” and “conduct indicating a need for supervision” for purposes of title 3 of Family Code). 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, § 22, 2017 Tex. Sess. Law Serv. 3173, 3187. 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). Upon review, we find the information at issue does not involve a juvenile identified as a suspect, offender, or defendant. Therefore, we find the department has failed to demonstrate the applicability of section 58.008 of the Family Code to any portion of the submitted information, and it may not be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code on this basis.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in relevant part:

(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.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of

age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

...

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

Id. § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). Upon review, we find the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *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), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, we find the submitted information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. However, we note the second requestor is the parent of the child victim named in the information at issue, and the parent is not alleged to have committed the abuse. Therefore, the department may not withhold the submitted information from the second requestor under section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.201(k). We also note section 261.201(l)(2) states that any information excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *See id.* § 261.201(l)(2). Thus, we will consider your argument under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy for the submitted information. As you do not indicate the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, and based on our review, we determine the submitted information is generally confidential for the first requestor pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

However, we note the first requestor is a representative of the Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) Texas Highway Patrol. Section 261.201 provides information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Chapter 411 of the Government Code constitutes “applicable state law” in this instance. Section 411.089(a) of the Government Code provides “[a] criminal justice agency is entitled to obtain from [DPS] any criminal history record information [(“CHRI”)] maintained by [DPS] about a person.” Gov’t Code § 411.089(a); *see also id.* § 411.083(b)(1) (providing DPS shall grant criminal justice agencies access to CHRI). In addition, section 411.087(a) of the Government Code provides, in pertinent part:

(a) [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). We note 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). A criminal justice agency that receives CHRI from another criminal justice agency pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) may only receive such information for a criminal justice purpose. *See id.* §§ 411.083(c), .087(b); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 655 (1997) (discussing limitations on release of CHRI). Section 411.082 defines a “criminal justice agency” as including “a federal or state agency that is engaged in the administration of criminal justice under a statute or executive order and that allocates a substantial portion of its annual budget to the administration of criminal justice[.]” Gov’t Code § 411.082(3)(A). “Administration of criminal justice” has the meaning assigned to it by article 60.01 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See id.* § 411.082(1). Article 60.01 defines “administration of criminal justice” as the “performance of any of the following activities: detection, apprehension, detention, pretrial release, post-trial release, prosecution, adjudication, correctional supervision, or rehabilitation of an offender. The term includes criminal identification activities and the collection, storage, and dissemination of [CHRI].” Crim. Proc. Code art. 60.01(1). Upon review, we find DPS is engaged in the administration of criminal justice for purposes of chapter 411. Therefore, the first requestor is authorized to obtain CHRI from the department pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but only for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with the Family Code. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(a); Gov’t Code §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2).

Although DPS is a criminal justice agency for purposes of chapter 411, we are unable to determine whether the first requestor intends to use the requested CHRI for a criminal justice purpose. We also are unable to determine whether the first requestor intends to use the information for purposes consistent with the Family Code. Consequently, if the department determines the first requestor intends to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the department must release the submitted information that shows the type of allegation made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions and must withhold the remaining information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. We note a statutory right of access prevails over a claim under common-law privacy. *See Collins v. Tex Mall, L.P.*, 297 S.W.3d 409, 415 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2009, no pet.) (statutory provision controls and preempts common law only when statute directly conflicts with common-law principle); *see*

also *CenterPoint Energy Houston Elec. LLC v. Harris County Toll Rd. Auth.*, 436 F.3d 541, 544 (5th Cir. 2006) (common law controls only where there is no conflicting or controlling statutory law). If the department determines the first requestor does not intend to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose or for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201. See Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g), (k) (listing entities authorized to receive section 261.201 information); Open Records Decision Nos. 655, 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute).

We will address your argument under common-law privacy with respect to the second requestor. 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 Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *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.). However, in certain instances, where it is demonstrated the requestor knows the identity of the individual involved, as well as the nature of certain incidents, the entire report must be withheld to protect the individual's privacy.

You claim the submitted information is protected in its entirety by common-law privacy. However, you have not demonstrated, nor does it otherwise appear, this is a situation in which this information must be withheld in its entirety on that basis. Thus, the department may not withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, upon review, we find the information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked from the second requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, you have not demonstrated how any of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest; thus, none of the remaining information may be withheld under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

In summary, if the department determines the first requestor intends to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the department must release the submitted information that shows the type of allegation made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions and must withhold the remaining information pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the

Family Code. If the department determines the first requestor does not intend to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose or for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201. In releasing information to the second requestor, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must release the remaining information to the second requestor.²

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/jxd

Ref: ID# 778368

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)

²We note the second requestor has a special right of access to the information being released. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k). Accordingly, if the department receives another request for this same information from a different requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office. We note the remaining information includes social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a government body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. Gov't Code § 552.147(b).