



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 25, 2019

Mr. Jonathan T. Koury
Assistant City Attorney
City of Bryan
P. O. Box 1000
Bryan, Texas 77805

OR2019-26782

Dear Mr. Koury:

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# 787687.

The Bryan Police Department (the "department") received a request for a specified incident report. The department claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we must address the procedural obligations of the department under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(b), a governmental body must ask for a decision from this office and state the exceptions that apply within ten business days of receiving the written request. Gov't Code § 552.301(b). Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request (1) written comments stating the reasons why the stated exceptions apply that would allow the information to be withheld, (2) a copy of the written request for information, (3) a signed statement or sufficient evidence showing the date the governmental body received the written request, and (4) a copy of the specific information requested or representative samples, labeled to indicate which exceptions apply to which parts of the documents. *Id.* § 552.301(e). The department informs us it received the request for information on June 20, 2019, and we understand the department was closed on July 4,

2019. Thus, the department's ten-business-day deadline under section 552.301(b) was July 5, 2019, and its fifteen-business-day deadline under section 552.301(e) was July 12, 2019. However, the department did not request a ruling from this office or submit the information at issue until July 18, 2019. Therefore, the department failed to comply with the procedural requirements mandated by section 552.301.

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). Because section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will address the applicability of this section to the information at issue. However, we find the department has failed to establish a compelling reason to address section 552.108 of the Government Code.

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. This section encompasses section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

[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). The department asserts the requested information was used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201), 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of section 261.201). Upon review, we find the information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. The department does not indicate it has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such rule exists. Therefore, we assume no such rule exists. Given that assumption, we determine the submitted information is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. *See Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).*

However, we note the requestor is a representative of the Brazos County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (the “corrections department”). 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 the [Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”)] any criminal history record information [(“CHRI”)] maintained by the [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, the following:

(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). Thus, the submitted information contains CHRI. 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). “Administration of criminal justice” has the meaning assigned to it by article 66.001 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See id.* § 411.082(1). Article 66.001 of the Code of Criminal Procedure defines “administration of criminal justice” as “the 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. 66.001(1).

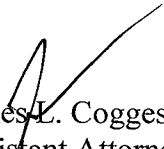
As previously noted, the requestor is a representative of the corrections department. Although the corrections department states it is engaged in the administration of criminal justice and intends to use the information for a criminal justice purpose, we are unable to

determine whether release of the CHRI is consistent with the Family Code. Accordingly, if the department determines release of the CHRI is consistent with the Family Code, then the department must release the CHRI, 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. If the department determines release of the CHRI is not consistent with the Family Code, then the department 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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/jxd

Ref: ID# 787687

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)