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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 9, 2019

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Ms. Brittaney N. Davis
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OR2019-28333

Dear Mr. Hansen and Ms. Davis:

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# 789988 (PIR Nos. W088165 and W089030).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received two requests from the same requestor for a specified police 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. This section encompasses information confidential under 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 Chapter 552, Government Code, 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 consists of files, reports, records, communications, audiotapes, videotapes, or working papers used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to section 261.201 of the Family Code. You have not indicated the city has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such rule exists. Given that assumption, the information at issue is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.¹ *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

However, the requestor is with Fort Worth Housing Solutions, which is a local housing authority. Section 1437d(q)(1)(A) of title 42 of the United States Code, the federal Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act of 1996, provides, “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of law, . . . the National Crime Information Center, police departments, and other law enforcement agencies shall, upon request, provide information to public housing agencies regarding the criminal conviction records of adult applicants for, or tenants of, covered housing assistance for purposes of applicant screening, lease enforcement, and eviction.” 42 U.S.C. § 1437d(q)(1)(A). In Open Records Decision No. 655 (1997), this office concluded a local housing authority is a noncriminal justice agency authorized by federal statute to receive criminal history record information (“CHRI”). ORD 655 at 4. CHRI consists of “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.” Gov’t Code § 411.082(2). The Department of Public Safety (the “DPS”) is required to provide CHRI to a noncriminal justice agency authorized to receive CHRI pursuant to a federal statute, executive order, or state statute. *Id.* § 411.083(b)(2). However, the federal law limits the purposes for which a public housing authority may request CHRI. The federal law provides, among other things, CHRI may only be used for purposes of applicant screening, lease enforcement, and eviction. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1437d(q)(1)(A); ORD 655 at 3-5. Section 1437d(q)(1)(A) states a housing authority shall be provided access to the CHRI “[notwithstanding any other provision of law[.]” 42 U.S.C. § 1437d(q)(1)(A). Based on this language, we find section 1437d(q)(1)(A) prevails over section 261.201 of the Family Code. *Cf. Equal Employment Opportunity Comm’n v. City of Orange, Texas*, 905 F. Supp. 381, 382 (E.D. Tex. 1995) (federal law prevails over inconsistent provision of state law).

The requestor represents the information responsive to her request will be used for purposes of applicant screening, lease enforcement, or eviction. Accordingly, any CHRI of applicants or tenants of public housing that is contained within the requested information, to the extent such information exists, must be released to this requestor in accordance with

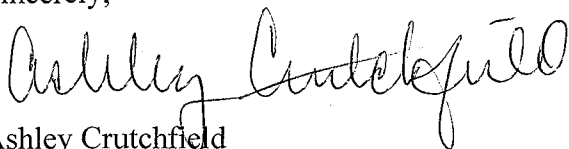
¹ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

section 1437d(q)(1) of chapter 42 of the United States Code. *See also* 24 C.F.R. § 5.903 (describing public housing authorities' access to criminal records). The city must withhold the remainder of the submitted information 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,



Ashley Crutchfield
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AC/rm

Ref: ID# 789988

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)