



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 18, 2019

Ms. Heather Silver
Assistant City Attorney
City Of Dallas
1400 South Lamar, 6th Floor, 6W
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2019-29360

Dear Ms. Silver:

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# 792170 (ORR# D019167).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual and a specified address for the previous two years. The department states it has released some of the requested information, but claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.²

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(b) of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

¹ The department acknowledges, and we agree, it did not comply with the requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Nevertheless, because section 552.101 of the Government Code can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness caused by a failure to comply with section 552.301, we will consider whether the submitted information must be withheld under the Act on that ground.

² We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

Except as provided by Subsection (c), 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;
- (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.

Act of May 14, 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., H.B. 1760, §4 (to be codified at 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 ten years old and less than seventeen years of age when the conduct occurred. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2) (defining “child” for purposes of title 3 of Family Code). We find the submitted information involves a juvenile offender, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). Therefore, this information is generally confidential under section 58.008(b) of the Family Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also 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). Upon review, we find some of the submitted information was used or developed in investigations under chapter 261. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201), 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of section 261.201). Therefore, this information is also generally confidential under 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

However, the requestor is a representative of a child-placing agency that is licensed by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (“DFPS”) in accordance with chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code, and she seeks information that pertains to the address of a prospective foster parent. *See generally* Hum. Res. Code ch. 42. Section 261.201 of the Family Code 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). Section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code constitutes such applicable state law.

A child-placing agency must complete a foster home screening prior to verifying a foster home. *See* 26 T.A.C. § 749.2445(a); Hum. Res. Code § 42.042(a), (h)-(h-1) (executive commissioner shall make rules to carry out provisions of chapter 42, including minimum standards for child-placing agencies). Further, child-placing agencies are required to evaluate a foster home for compliance with licensing rules in certain instances. *See* 26 T.A.C. § 749.2801. Pursuant to section 749.2471, verifying a foster home includes completing and documenting the requirements set out in section 749.2447 of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code. *Id.* § 749.2471(1); *cf.* Hum. Res. Code § 42.0561 (providing, in part, that “[b]efore a child-placing agency may issue a verification certificate for an agency foster home, the child-placing agency must obtain information relating to each family violence report at the applicant’s residence to which a law enforcement agency responded during the 12 months preceding the date of the application. The applicant shall provide the information on a form prescribed by the department.”). Section 749.2447(7) provides a child-placing agency must obtain, document, and assess, in part, the following information about a prospective foster home:

The results of criminal history and central registry background checks conducted on the prospective foster parents[.] . . . With respect to law enforcement service call information, [the child-placing agency] *must do the following*:

- (i) *Obtain service call information from the appropriate law enforcement agency for each of the prospective foster parents’ addresses for the past two years.* Discuss with the prospective foster parents any service call information that [the child-placing agency] obtain[s] from a law enforcement agency and the facts surrounding the incident.

...

(iii) Assess and document information obtained from law enforcement and any discussion with the prospective foster parents in the foster home screening.

26 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(B)(i), (iii) (emphasis added); *see id.* § 749.2445(a); *see* 40 TAC § 745.21(8) (defining “child-placing agency”), (32) (defining “permit”), (33) (defining “permit holder”); *see* 26 TAC § 749.41(1) (defining “you” as applicant or permit holder), .43 (words and terms in chapter 749 have meanings assigned under section 745.21). Thus, sections 749.2447(7) and 749.2471 of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code require a child-placing agency to obtain all service call information for a two-year period for service calls to the addresses of prospective foster parents from appropriate law enforcement agencies. *See* 26 T.A.C. §§ 749.2471, .2447(7). Accordingly, we find a child-placing agency licensed by DFPS under chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code has a right of access to this information under section 749.2447(7) when it is obtained for the purpose of verifying a prospective foster home pursuant to the requirements of section 749.2471.

The requestor is seeking information involving a prospective foster parent at that individual’s residence for a specified time period. Accordingly, we conclude the requestor generally has a right of access to the submitted reports pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code. However, as noted above, section 261.201(a) states any release must be “for purposes consistent with the Family Code.” *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We find release of the information subject to section 261.201(a) to this requestor is for a purpose consistent with the Family Code. Thus, pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code, the department may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201(a).

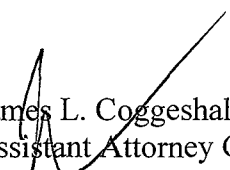
Nonetheless, we must address the conflict between the access provided under section 749.2447(7) and the confidentiality provided under section 58.008(b) of the Family Code and section 552.130 of the Government Code. Where information falls within both a general and a specific statutory provision, the specific provision prevails over the general statute. *See id.* § 311.026 (where general statutory provision conflicts with specific provision, specific provision prevails as exception to general provision unless general provision is later enactment and manifest intent is that general provision prevails); *Cuellar v. State*, 521 S.W.2d 277 (Tex. Crim. App. 1975) (under well-established rule of statutory construction, specific statutory provisions prevail over general ones). While section 58.008(b) generally makes juvenile law enforcement records confidential with respect to the general public, section 749.2447(7) requires release of information for a specified address and time period to a specified type of requestor in a certain circumstance — a child-placing agency verifying a foster home at that address. *See* Fam. Code § 58.008(b); 26 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7). Thus, the statutory right of access granted to the requestor by section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code prevails over the more general confidentiality provision of section 58.008(b) of the Family Code. Consequently, the city may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(b) of the Family Code. Accordingly,

we conclude the department must release the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative 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 <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/be

Ref: ID# 792170

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

³ Because the requestor has a special right of access to the information being released, the department must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.