



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 23, 2019

Ms. Amy L. Sims
Deputy City Attorney
City of Lubbock
P.O. Box 2000
Lubbock, Texas 79457

OR2019-29987

Dear Ms. Sims:

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# 799856.

The Lubbock Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. 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 exceptions the department claims 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." *Id.* § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

- (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[.]

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). We note the submitted information was used or developed in investigations of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. *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 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). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code.

However, we note the requestor may be the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim listed in the information. As such, this requestor may have a right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 261.201(k). As we are unable to determine whether the requestor is the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim, we will rule conditionally. If the requestor is not the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim listed in the submitted information, 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. Conversely, if the requestor is the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim listed in the submitted information, then the department may not withhold the submitted information from the requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of section 261.201(a). However, section 261.201(1)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law may still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(1)(2). Thus, to the extent the requestor is the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim listed in the submitted information, we will consider your arguments against disclosure of the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(2) must demonstrate the information at issue relates to a criminal investigation that has concluded in a final result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(2), .301(e)(1)(A). The department states the submitted information pertains to a case that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, we agree section 552.108(a)(2) is applicable to this information.

However, section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. *Id.* § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). *See* Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.

In summary, if the requestor is not the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim listed in the submitted information, 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. If the requestor is the managing conservator or other legal representative of the child victim, then, with the exception of basic information, the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code.¹

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.

¹We note the requestor may have a special right of access to the information being released in this instance. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(k); *see also* Gov't Code § 552.023(a) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates, or that party's representative, solely on grounds that information is considered confidential by privacy principles). Accordingly, if the department receives another request for this information from a different requestor, then it should again seek a ruling from this office.

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,



Jesse Harvey
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHI/gw

Ref: ID# 799856

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)