



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 3, 2020

Ms. Katheryne Ellison
Assistant General Counsel
Houston Independent School District
4400 West 18th Street
Houston, Texas 77092-8501

OR2020-00165

Dear Ms. Ellison:

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# 805978 (ORR# DDO102219).

The Houston Independent School District (the "district") received a request for personnel files, investigations, and documents sent to the Texas Education Agency related to a named district employee. The district claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the district claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the district has submitted only a police report in response to the request for information. To the extent any additional responsive information existed on the date the district received the request, we assume the district has released it. If the district has not released any such information, it must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301(a), .302; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if governmental body concludes no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible).

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial

decision.”¹ Gov’t Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by 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). We note the district is not an agency authorized to conduct an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.103 (listing agencies that may conduct child abuse investigations). However, the district’s police department (the “department”) and the Houston Police Department (collectively, the “departments”) are such agencies. The submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect conducted by the departments. *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 this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. The district does not indicate its police department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information and therefore we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, we conclude the district must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code.² *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute).

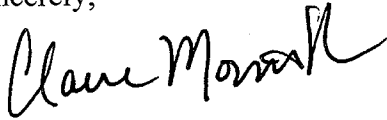
This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

¹ The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the district’s argument against disclosure of the submitted information.

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,



Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/mo

Ref: ID# 805978

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)