



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 2, 2020

Mr. Matthew Murray
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
200 Texas Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2020-10156

Dear Mr. Murray:

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# 819922 (PIR# W096095).

The Fort Worth Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses information other statutes make confidential, such as section 58.008 of the Family Code, which provides, in part:

(b) 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.

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. The juvenile must have been at least 10 years old and less than 17 years of age when the conduct occurred. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2) (defining “child” for purposes of title 3 of Family Code). Portions of the submitted information involves juvenile offenders, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). We note report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 involve the named individual as a suspect who was older than seventeen at the time of the incidents at issue. Although the requestor is a representative of the United States Federal Probation Office for the United States District Court (the “probation office”), the requestor is seeking information about an adult arrestee and not the juvenile offenders identified in the reports at issue. Thus, we conclude the requestor does not have a right of access to the information under section 58.008(d) of the Family Code. *See id.* § 58.008(d)(2) (providing “[l]aw enforcement records concerning a child may be inspected or copied by . . . a criminal justice agency, as defined by Section 411.082, Government Code[.]”). Therefore, the department must generally withhold report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.008(b).

We note, however, section 411.089(a) of the Government Code provides that “[a] criminal justice agency is entitled to obtain from the [Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”)] any criminal history record information [(“CHRI”)] maintained by [DPS] about a person.” *See* Gov’t Code § 411.089(a). 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). We note report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 contain CHRI of the individual named in the request. However, 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 of the Government Code 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 66.001 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See id.* § 411.082(1). Article 66.001 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). The probation office is a criminal justice agency as defined by section 411.082, and we understand the requestor intends to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose. Consequently, pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2), the department must generally make available to the requestor CHRI pertaining to the named individual. Thus, there is a conflict between the confidentiality provided by section 58.008(b) of the Family Code and the requestor’s right of access under section 411.087(a)(2) 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* Gov’t Code § 311.026 (where general statutory provision conflicts with specific provision, specific provision prevails as exception to general provision unless the general provision is the later enactment and the manifest intent is that the general provision prevail); *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). In this instance, although section 58.008(b) of the Family Code generally makes juvenile law enforcement records confidential, section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code gives specific types of requestors, criminal justice agencies, access to particular information, CHRI, for a criminal justice purpose. Thus, the statutory right of access granted to the requestor by section 411.087(a)(2) prevails over the more general confidentiality provision of section 58.008(b). Therefore, notwithstanding section 58.008(b), the department must make CHRI pertaining to the named individual available to the requestor pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2). The department must withhold the remaining information in report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 58.008(b).

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. A compilation of an individual’s criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. U.S. Dep’t of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (finding significant privacy interest in compilation of individual’s criminal history by recognizing distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of

criminal history information). Furthermore, we find a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public.

The present request requires the department to compile unspecified law enforcement records concerning a named individual. We find this request for unspecified law enforcement records implicates the named individual's right to privacy. Thus, with the exception of report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must generally withhold such information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, information that refers to an individual solely as a victim, witness, or involved person is not a compilation of the individual's criminal history and may not be withheld under section 552.101 on that basis. We note the department has submitted information that does not list the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant. This information does not consist of a compilation of the named individual's criminal history, and it may not be withheld under section 552.101 on that basis. Accordingly, we will address the applicability of other exceptions to disclosure of this information.

As discussed above, however, the requestor has a right of access to CHRI of the named individual pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code. We note a statutory right of access also prevails over a claim under common-law privacy. *See Collins v. Tex Mall, L.P.*, 297 S.W.3d 409, 415 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2009, no pet.) (statutory provision controls and preempts common law only when statute directly conflicts with common law principle); *see also CenterPoint Energy Houston Elec. LLC v. Harris County Toll Rd. Auth.*, 436 F.3d 541, 544 (5th Cir. 2006) (common law controls only where there is no conflicting or controlling statutory law). Therefore, other than report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109, to the extent the department maintains unspecified law enforcement records listing the named individual as a suspect, arrested person, or criminal defendant, the department must release to the requestor the CHRI from any such records, but must withhold any such remaining information under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

As discussed above, section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. *Indus. Found.*, 540 S.W.2d at 683. The Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens' dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at *3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). Accordingly, the department must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.130 of the Government Code provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator's license, driver's license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release.¹ *See Gov't Code* § 552.130. Upon review, we find portions

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).*

of the remaining information, which we marked, consist of motor vehicle record information subject to section 552.130. Therefore, the department must withhold the information we marked under section 552.130.

In summary, the department must release the named individual's CHRI in report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 to the requestor pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code and withhold the remaining information in report numbers 07-151724 and 10-74109 under section 58.008(b) of the Family Code in conjunction with section 552.101 of the Government Code. To the extent the department maintains any remaining unspecified law enforcement records listing the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must release the named individual's CHRI to the requestor pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code and must withhold any such remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold all public citizens' dates of birth under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the motor vehicle record information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.²

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,

D. Michelle Case
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

DMC/eb

² We note the information being released in this instance includes information that is confidential with respect to the general public. See Gov't Code §§ 411.087(a)(2), .089. Therefore, if the department receives another request for this information from an individual other than this requestor, the department must again seek a ruling from this office. Additionally, we note the remaining information includes social security numbers. Section 552.147(b) of the Government Code authorizes a government body to redact a living person's social security number from public release without the necessity of requesting a decision from this office under the Act. *Id.* § 552.147(b).

Ref: ID# 819922

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)