



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 30, 2020

Mr. John B. Strong
Assistant City Attorney
City of Fort Worth
200 Texas Street, 3rd Floor
Fort Worth, Texas 76102-6311

OR2020-27231

Dear Mr. Strong:

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# 853188 (ORR# W104640).

The Fort Worth Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual. The department claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exception 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 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). The department asserts the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation under chapter 261. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201), 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of section 261.201). Upon review, we find the information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. The department does not indicate it has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume no such rule exists. Accordingly, the submitted information is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201. However, section 261.201(a) provides information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” *Id.* § 261.201(a). Chapter 411 of the Government Code constitutes “applicable state law” in this instance.

We note the requestor is a representative of the Tarrant County Community Supervision and Corrections Department. Section 411.089(a) of the Government Code provides “[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)(2) of the Government Code provides 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). 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). 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 criminal history record information). Thus, to the extent the requestor represents a “criminal justice agency,” the requestor is authorized to obtain CHRI concerning the named individual from the department pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but only for a criminal justice purpose. *See Gov’t Code* §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2).

Although the requestor represents a criminal justice agency as defined by section 411.082 and we understand she intends to use the CHRI of the named individual for a criminal justice purpose, we are unable to determine whether the requestor intends to use the information at issue for purposes consistent with the Family Code. *See* Gov't Code §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2); *see also* Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Accordingly, we must rule conditionally. If the department determines the requestor intends to use the CHRI for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the department must release the CHRI of the named individual pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. However, if the department determines the requestor does not intend to use the CHRI for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then 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. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g), (k) (listing entities authorized to receive section 261.201 information); Open Records Decision Nos. 655, 440 at 2 (1986) (construing 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.

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/jm

Ref: ID# 853188

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)