



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 2, 2020

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

OR2020-30008

Dear Mr. Qualls:

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# 856399 (ORR# W105748).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for information related to a specified arrest of a named individual. The city claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the city 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 261.201 of the Family Code 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). The submitted report was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect conducted by the city's police department (the "department"). *See id.* §§ 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 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. The city does not indicate the 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 submitted report is generally confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code.

However, the requestor is a representative of the Arkansas Department of Corrections (the "Arkansas DOC"). 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. 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 the [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:

(a) [A] person, agency, department, political subdivision, or other entity that is authorized by this subchapter or Subchapter E-1 to obtain from the [DPS CHRI] maintained by the [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). Thus, the submitted information contains CHRI. 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). Therefore, if the Arkansas DOC is a "criminal justice agency," then the requestor is authorized to obtain CHRI from the city pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but only for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with

the Family Code. *See* Gov't Code §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2); *see also* Fam. Code § 261.201(a).

Section 411.082 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 by article 66.001 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See id.* § 411.082(1). Article 66.001 of the Code of Criminal Procedure defines “[a]dministration 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).

In this instance, the requestor represents a criminal justice agency and we understand the requested CHRI will be used for a criminal justice purpose. However, we are unable to determine whether disclosure of the information is for purposes consistent with the Family Code. Consequently, if the city determines disclosure of the information is not for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the city must withhold the submitted report in its entirety pursuant to 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). However, if the city determines disclosure of the information is for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the city must generally release CHRI from the submitted report and, in that instance, the city must withhold the remainder of the submitted report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. However, we must consider whether the CHRI is confidential on other grounds.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses 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). The submitted report involves a juvenile offender, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). We note the information lists the named individual as a suspect who was older than seventeen at the time of the incident at issue. Although the requestor is a representative of the Arkansas DOC, the requestor seeks information about an adult arrestee and not the juvenile offender identified in the submitted report. 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) (providing “[I]aw enforcement records concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code[.]”). Therefore, the city must generally withhold the CHRI related to the submitted report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008 of the Family Code.

However, as noted above, the Arkansas DOC generally has a right of access to CHRI pursuant to sections 411.087 and 411.089(a) of the Government Code. Consequently, pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2), the city must generally make available to the requestor CHRI from the submitted report 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, the city may not withhold the CHRI pertaining to the named individual under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(b) of the Family Code.

In summary, the city must generally withhold the submitted report under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code; however, if the city determines disclosure of the information is for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the city must release CHRI pertaining to the named individual available to the requestor from the submitted report pursuant to section 411.089 of the Government Code.

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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/mo

Ref: ID# 856399

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)