



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 24, 2022

Mr. Pedro Jose Morales IV
Counsel for United Independent School District
J. Cruz & Associates, LLC
216 West Village Boulevard, Suite 202
Laredo, Texas 78041

OR2022-05672

Dear Mr. Morales:

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# 932606.

The United Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for video footage from a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

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." Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses section 58.008 of the Family Code, which provides as follows:

(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.

...

(d) Law enforcement records concerning a child may be inspected or copied by:

(1) a juvenile justice agency, as defined by Section 58.101;

(2) a criminal justice agency, as defined by Section 411.082, Government Code;

(3) the child; or

(4) the child's parent or guardian.

(e) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or a copy a record concerning the child under Subsection (d), the custodian of the record shall redact:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or any other law.

Fam. Code § 58.008(b), (d), (e); *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 ten years old and less than seventeen years of age when the conduct occurred. *See* Fam. Code § 51.02(2) (defining “child” for purposes of title 3 of Family Code). Upon review, we find the submitted information involves a juvenile offender, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). In this instance, however, the requestor may be a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender at issue and, thus, may have a right of access to the information at issue pursuant to section 58.008(d). *See* Fam. Code § 58.008(d). Therefore, we must rule conditionally. To the extent the requestor is not a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender, then the district must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(b) of the Family Code. To the extent the requestor is a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender, then the district may not withhold the information at issue on that ground. *See id.* In that case, section 58.008(e)(2) states any information excepted from required disclosure must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.008(e)(2). Thus, we will consider your remaining argument against disclosure of the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime . . . if . . . release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.108(a)(1). A governmental body claiming section 552.108(a)(1) must explain how and why the release of the requested information would interfere with law enforcement. *See id.* §§ 552.108(a)(1), .301(e)(1)(A); *see also Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977). The district states the submitted information pertains to a pending criminal investigation by the district’s police department. Based on this representation, we conclude release of the information will interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ’g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (court delineates law enforcement interests that are present in active cases), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Accordingly, we find the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, to the extent the requestor is not a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender, then the district must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(b) of the Family Code. To the extent the requestor is a parent or legal guardian of the juvenile offender, then the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) 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,

Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/jm

Ref: ID# 932606

c: Requestor