



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 25, 2022

Mr. Robert Spangler  
Counsel for the Jim Wells County Sheriff's Office  
Royston Rayzor  
802 North Carancahua, Suite 1300  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78401

OR2022-05926

Dear Mr. Spangler:

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# 935397 (ORR# 46,769).

The Jim Wells County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. The sheriff's office claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.108(a) 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: (1) 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 information at issue 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, 710 (Tex. 1977). The sheriff's office states the submitted information relates to a pending criminal investigation or prosecution. Based on this representation, we conclude the release of this information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime. *See Houston Chronicle Publ'g Co. v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177, 186-87 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1975) (delineating law enforcement interests present in active cases), *writ ref'd n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976).

Section 552.108 does not except from disclosure basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime. Gov't Code § 552.108(c). Basic information refers to the information held to be public in the *Houston Chronicle* decision. See 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 at 3-4 (1976) (summarizing types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle* decision). Thus, with the exception of basic information, the sheriff's office may generally withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup>

However, the requestor is an investigator with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Section 411.114 of the Government Code allows, among other things, for DFPS to obtain criminal history record information ("CHRI") concerning an individual who is the subject of a report of abuse or neglect of a child. See Gov't Code § 411.114(a)(4), (a)(2)(I). CHRI consists of "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).

The requestor does not state whether any suspect at issue in the submitted information is a suspect in a report of abuse or neglect of a child. Therefore, we must rule conditionally. See *id.* § 411.114; see also *id.* § 411.082(2). If any suspect at issue in the submitted report is a suspect in a report of abuse or neglect of a child, then the sheriff's office must release the CHRI pertaining to that individual pursuant to section 411.114 of the Government Code. See Open Records Decision No. 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exceptions to disclosure under the Act). However, if no suspect is a suspect in a report of abuse or neglect of a child, then the sheriff's office is not required to release any individual's CHRI on that ground.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which the sheriff's office must release, the sheriff's office may withhold the submitted information under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. However, if any suspect at issue in the submitted report is a suspect in a report of abuse or neglect of a child, then the sheriff's office must release the CHRI pertaining to that individual pursuant to section 411.114 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

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<sup>1</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the other arguments of the sheriff's office to withhold this information.

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/ba

Ref: ID# 935397

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)