



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 22, 2022

Mr. Robert R. Ray
Assistant City Attorney
City of Longview
P.O. Box 1952
Longview, Texas 75606-1952

OR2022-08246

Dear Mr. Ray:

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# 939252 (ORR# 2022-33).

The City of Longview (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified address. The city 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.

The requestor is a representative of a child-placing agency that is licensed by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services ("DFPS") in accordance with chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code, and she may have a right of access to the requested information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code. *See generally* Hum. Res. Code ch. 42. Section 1702.284(a) of the Occupations Code provides information subject to that section may be disclosed "as otherwise required by state law[.]" Occ. Code § 1702.284(a). Section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code constitutes such applicable state law. *See generally* Hum. Res. Code ch. 42.

A child-placing agency must complete a foster home screening prior to verifying a foster home. *See* 26 T.A.C. § 749.2445(a); Hum. Res. Code § 42.042(a), (h)-(h-1) (executive commissioner shall make rules to carry out provisions of chapter 42, including minimum standards for child-placing agencies). Further, child-placing agencies are required to evaluate a foster home for compliance with licensing rules in certain instances. *See* 26 T.A.C. § 749.2801. Pursuant to section 749.2470, verifying a foster home includes completing and documenting the requirements set out in section 749.2447 of title 26 of the

Texas Administrative Code. *Id.* § 749.2470(1); *cf.* Hum. Res. Code § 42.0561 (providing, in part, that “[b]efore a child-placing agency may issue a verification certificate for an agency foster home, the child-placing agency must obtain information relating to each family violence report at the applicant’s residence to which a law enforcement agency responded during the 12 months preceding the date of the application. The applicant shall provide the information on a form prescribed by [DFPS].”). Section 749.2447(7) provides a child-placing agency must obtain, document, and assess, in part, the following information about a prospective foster home:

The results of criminal history and central registry background checks conducted on the prospective foster parents[.] . . . With respect to law enforcement service call information, [the child-placing agency] *must do the following*:

(i) *Obtain service call information from the appropriate law enforcement agency for each of the prospective foster parents’ addresses for the past two years.* Discuss with the prospective foster parents any service call information that [the child-placing agency] obtain[s] from a law enforcement agency and the facts surrounding the incident.

. . .

(iii) Assess and document information obtained from law enforcement and any discussion with the prospective foster parents in the foster home screening.

26 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(B)(i), (iii) (emphasis added); *see also id.* §§ 745.21(8) (defining “child-placing agency”), (32) (defining “permit”), (33) (defining “permit holder”), 749.41(1) (defining “you” as applicant or permit holder), .43 (words and terms in chapter 749 have meanings assigned under section 745.21), 749.2445(a). Thus, sections 749.2447(7) and 749.2470 of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code require a child-placing agency to obtain all service call information for a two-year period for service calls to the addresses of prospective foster parents from appropriate law enforcement agencies. *See* 26 T.A.C. §§ 749.2470, .2447(7). Accordingly, we find a child-placing agency licensed by DFPS under chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code has a right of access to this information under section 749.2447(7) when it is obtained for the purpose of verifying a prospective foster home pursuant to the requirements of section 749.2470.

The requestor states she is seeking information involving a prospective foster parent at that individual’s residence. A statutory right of access 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). Thus, the city may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.101 on that ground.

Accordingly, the city must release the submitted information to the requestor pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 26 of the Texas Administrative Code.¹

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/ba

Ref: ID# 939252

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹ Because the requestor has a special right of access to some of the information being released, the city must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.