



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 22, 2022

Ms. Sarah Hodges
Assistant County Attorney
Harris County
1019 Congress Street, 15th Floor
Houston, Texas 77002-1700

OR2022-21534

Dear Ms. Hodges:

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# 961333 (C.A. File Nos. 22PIA0539 and 22PIA0540).

The Harris County Constable's Office, Precinct 4 (the "constable's office") received two requests from different requestors for information pertaining to a specified incident. You state you have released some information to both requestors. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception 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."¹ 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 The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

(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:

(1) any personally identifiable information about a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the child; and

(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 Exhibit B involves juvenile offenders, so as to fall within the scope of section 58.008(b). In this instance, however, each requestor is a parent or legal guardian of one of the juvenile offenders at issue and, thus, has a right of access to the information at issue pursuant to section 58.008(d). *See* Fam. Code § 58.008(d). Therefore, the constable's office may not withhold the information at issue on that ground. *See id.* However, section 58.008(e)(1) states any personally identifiable information about

a juvenile suspect, offender, victim, or witness who is not the requestor's child must be redacted. *See id.* § 58.008(e)(1). Thus, the constable's office must withhold the personally identifiable information of the other juvenile offender, which we marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(e)(1) of the Family Code. *Id.* § 58.008(d), (e)(1). Further, 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 argument against disclosure of the information at issue.

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 constable's office states Exhibit B pertains to a pending criminal investigation. Based upon this representation, we conclude the release of the information at issue 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 (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). Thus, section 552.108(a)(1) is applicable to Exhibit B.

However, we note 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 *Houston Chronicle*. *See* 531 S.W.2d at 186-88; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing types of information considered to basic information). We note basic information does not include the names of witnesses or involved others. *See* ORD 127 at 3-4. Thus, with the exception of basic information, which generally must be released, the constable's office may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of basic information, which must be released, the constable's office may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.108(a)(1) of the Government Code. In releasing basic information, the constable's office must withhold the personally identifiable information concerning the other juvenile offender, which we marked, under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.008(e)(1) of the Family Code. The constable's office must release the remaining information.

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,

Kimbell Kesling
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KK/jxd

Ref: ID# 961333

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors
(w/o enclosures)