



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 24, 2010

Ms. S. McClellan
Assistant City Attorney
Criminal Law and Police Division
City of Dallas
1400 South Lamar
Dallas, Texas 75215

OR2010-12884

Dear Ms. McClellan:

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# 391428 (DPD ORR #2010-05220).

The Dallas Police Department (the "department") received a request from an investigator with the Texas Education Agency (the "TEA") for information pertaining to a named individual and a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 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. This exception encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code. Section 261.201 provides as follows:

(a) Except as provided by Section 261.203, the following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] 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 information was used or developed in an investigation of child endangerment. *See id.* §§ 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 101.003 (defining “child” for purpose of this section as a 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). Therefore, we agree the submitted information was conducted pursuant to chapter 261 of the Family Code. Accordingly, we conclude the submitted information is generally confidential under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201. *See* Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing statutory predecessor to section 261.201).

Section 261.201(a) provides, however, that information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” Fam. Code § 261.201(a). In this instance, section 22.082 of the Education Code constitutes “applicable state law.” Section 22.082 provides that the TEA “may obtain from any law enforcement or criminal justice agency all criminal history record information [“CHRI”] and all records contained in any closed criminal investigation file that relate to a specific applicant for or holder of a certificate issued under Subchapter B, Chapter 21 [of the Education Code].” Educ. Code § 22.082. 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.” Gov’t Code § 411.082(2); *see also id.* §§ 411.0901 (TEA is entitled to obtain CHRI from Texas Department of Public Safety (“DPS”) relating to certain employees of schools), .090 (State Board for Educator Certification (“SBEC”) is entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS about a person who has applied to SBEC for certificate under subchapter B, chapter 21, Education Code), .087(a)(2) (agency entitled to obtain CHRI from DPS also authorized to “obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state criminal history record information maintained by that [agency]”); *cf. Brookshire v. Houston Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 508 S.W.2d 675, 678-79 (Tex. Civ. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1974, no writ) (when legislature defines term in one statute and uses same term in relation to same subject matter in later statute, later use of term is same as previously defined).

In this instance, the requestor is an investigator with the TEA, which has assumed the duties of SBEC.¹ The requestor states the TEA is conducting an investigation of a named individual who either has applied for or currently holds educator credentials. The requestor seeks access to information relating to a specific case that involves the named individual.

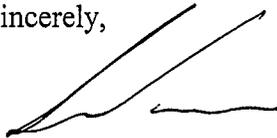
¹The 79th Texas legislature passed House Bill 1116, which required the transfer of SBEC’s administrative functions and services to the TEA, effective September 1, 2005.

You state the submitted information is related to a pending criminal investigation. Accordingly, as you acknowledge, the requestor has a right of access under section 22.082 of the Education Code to CHRI regarding the named individual. Therefore, if the department determines the release of CHRI is consistent with the Family Code, then, as you acknowledge, the department must release information from the submitted documents that shows the type of allegations made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions. In that event, we agree the department must withhold the rest of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. If the department determines the release of CHRI is not consistent with the Family Code, then the submitted information must be withheld from the requestor in its entirety under section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201.² See Attorney General Opinions DM-353 at 4 n. 6 (1995) (finding interagency transfer of information prohibited where confidentiality statute enumerates specific entities to which release of information is authorized and where potential receiving governmental body is not among statute's enumerated entities), JM-590 at 4-5 (1986); see also Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g) (listing entities authorized to receive information under section 261.201 of the Family 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 http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Ana Carolina Vieira
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ACV/eeg

²As we are able to make this determination, we do not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

Ref: ID# 391428

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)