



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

November 15, 2010

Ms. Teresa J. Brown  
Senior Open Records Assistant  
Plano Police Department  
P.O. Box 860358  
Plano, Texas 75086-0358

OR2010-17191

Dear Ms. Brown:

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# 400945 (Plano Ref. #FREJ090810).

The Plano Police Department (the "department") received a request for police records involving two named individuals. You state you have released some of the requested information. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 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 disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, 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). You state the submitted information consists of records created by the department “concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of a child.” The submitted information indicates the victim in this instance was under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged abuse or neglect. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of this section as 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), 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Upon review, we determine the submitted information falls within the scope of section 261.201. *See id.* § 261.201(a). You do not indicate that the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Therefore, we assume that no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, we find the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201 of the Family Code and is generally excepted from public disclosure pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code. However, section 261.201 of the Family Code also provides that information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” *Id.*

We note that chapter 411 of the Government Code constitutes “applicable state law” in this instance. Section 411.1285(a) of the Government Code provides in part that “[a] domestic relations office created under Chapter 203, Family Code, is entitled to obtain from the [Texas Department of Public Safety] criminal history record information that relates to a person who is a party to a proceeding in which the domestic relations office is providing services permitted under Chapter 203, Family Code.”<sup>1</sup> Gov’t Code § 411.1285(a); *see also* Fam. Code ch. 203 (governing administration of domestic relations offices). In addition, section 411.087(a) of the Government Code provides in pertinent part:

(a) A person, agency, department, political subdivision, or other entity that is authorized by this subchapter to obtain from the [Texas Department of Public Safety] criminal history record information maintained by the [Texas Department of Public Safety] that relates to another person is authorized to:

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<sup>1</sup>A “domestic relations office” is defined as “a county office that serves families, county departments, and courts to ensure effective implementation of this title.” Fam. Code § 203.001(2).

(2) obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state criminal history record information maintained by that criminal justice agency that relates to that person.

Gov't Code § 411.087(a)(2). We note that "criminal history record information" is defined as "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." *Id.* § 411.082(2). Thus, the information at issue contains "criminal history record information." However, a domestic relations office may only receive criminal history record information if the information relates to a person who is a party to a proceeding in which the domestic relations office is providing services permitted under chapter 203 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 411.1285(a); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 655 (1997) (discussing limitations on release of criminal history record information).

In this instance, the requestor is a representative of the Dallas County Domestic Relations Office (the "office"), and states the requested information will be used in a court ordered social study. *See* Fam. Code § 107.051(b) (court ordered social study may be performed by domestic relations office). Therefore, if the department determines the submitted information relates to a person who is a party to a proceeding in which the office is providing services permitted under chapter 203 of the Family Code, and release of the information is consistent with chapter 261 of the Family Code, then the department must make available to the requestor information that shows identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, detentions, indictments, informations, and other formal criminal charges and their dispositions. *See* Open Records Decision No. 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exceptions to disclosure under the Act). With the exception of this information, the department must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

However, if the department determines either that the submitted information does not relate to a person who is a party to a proceeding in which the office is providing services permitted under chapter 203 of the Family Code or that disclosure of the submitted information is not consistent with chapter 261 of the Family Code, then the department must withhold the submitted information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g) (listing entities authorized to receive section 261.201 information); *see also* 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); Open Records Decision No. 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute).

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](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,



Lindsay E. Hale  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

LEH/bs

Ref: ID# 400945

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)