



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 14, 2014

Mr. Jose Hernandez
Records Supervisor
City of Edinburg
1702 South Closner Boulevard
Edinburg, Texas 75839

OR2014-20743

Dear Mr. Hernandez:

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# 543361.

The Edinburg Police Department (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to any arrest of a named individual. 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.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision."¹ Gov't Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 of the Government Code encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be established. *Id.* at 681-82. A

¹The 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).

compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. U.S. Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (finding significant privacy interest in compilation of individual's criminal history by recognizing distinction between public records found in courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of criminal history information). Furthermore, we find a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public. Upon review, we find the current request for any arrest reports involving a named individual requires the department to compile unspecified criminal history records and implicates the named individual's right to privacy. Accordingly, to the extent the department maintains unspecified records that depict the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, it must generally withhold that information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note the requestor is an investigator with the Child Protective Services Division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services ("DFPS"). Section 411.114(a) of the Government Code states, in pertinent part,

(2) The [DFPS] shall obtain from the [Department of Public Safety ("DPS")] criminal history record information ["CHRI"] maintained by the [DPS] that relates to a person who is:

...

(I) an alleged perpetrator in a report the [DFPS] receives alleging that the person has abused, neglected, or exploited a child, an elderly person, or a person with a disability, provided that:

(i) the report alleges the person has engaged in conduct that meets the applicable definition of abuse, neglect, or exploitation under Chapter 261, Family Code, or Chapter 48, Human Resources Code; and

(ii) the person is not also the victim of the alleged conduct[.]

...

(4) Subject to Section 411.087, the [DFPS] is entitled to:

...

(B) obtain from any other criminal justice agency in this state [CHRI] maintained by that criminal justice agency that relates to a person described by Subdivision (2) or (3)[.]

Gov't Code § 411.114(a)(2)(I), (4)(B). 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." *Id.* § 411.082(2). Thus, this requestor has a right of access under section 411.114 to CHRI in information held by the department if it involves an alleged perpetrator in a report of child abuse or neglect. In this instance, the DFPS investigator does not state the named individual is the alleged perpetrator in a report of abuse or neglect of a child, but only requests information about the named individual. Therefore, to the extent the named individual is an alleged perpetrator in a report of child abuse or neglect that was reported to DFPS, the department must release the type of allegation made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions from any responsive information, to the extent it exists, depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant. *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); *CenterPoint Energy Houston Elec. LLC v. Harris County Toll Rd.*, 436 F.3d 541, 544 (5th Cir. 2006) (common law controls only where there is no conflicting or controlling statutory law). Although you claim this information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.108 of the Government Code, a specific statutory right of access prevails over general exceptions to disclosure under the Act. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993) (exceptions in Act cannot impinge on statutory right of access to information), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exception to disclosure under the Act). To the extent it exists, any remaining information depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, to the extent the named individual is not an alleged perpetrator in a report of child abuse or neglect that was reported to DFPS, then, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records depicting the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information in its entirety under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/>

[orl_ruling_info.shtml](#), 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 may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Behnke', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Behnke
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JB/som

Ref: ID# 543361

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)