



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 14, 2016

Mr. Bryan McWilliams  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Amarillo  
P. O. Box 1971  
Amarillo, Texas 79105-1971

OR2016-05838

Dear Mr. McWilliams:

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# 602278.

The Amarillo Police Department (the "department") received a request for information involving the requestor and the requestor's wife or child. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in relevant part, as follows:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent

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<sup>1</sup>We note the department did not comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting a ruling from this office. See Gov't Code § 552.301(b), (e). Nonetheless, because the exception you claim can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will consider its applicability to the submitted information. See *id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352.

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.

...

(k) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), an investigating agency, other than the [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services] or the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, on request, shall provide to the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child who is the subject of reported abuse or neglect, or to the child if the child is at least 18 years of age, information concerning the reported abuse or neglect that would otherwise be confidential under this section. The investigating agency shall withhold information under this subsection if the parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of the child requesting the information is alleged to have committed the abuse or neglect.

(l) Before a child or a parent, managing conservator, or other legal representative of a child may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (k), the custodian of the record or file must redact:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act], or other law[.]

Fam. Code § 261.201(a), (k), (l)(2). Upon review, we find some of the submitted information consists of files, reports, records, communications, or working papers used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, we find this information is subject to chapter 261 of the Family Code. However, we note the requestor is a parent of the child victim listed in the information, and is not alleged to have committed the abuse in the information at issue. Thus, pursuant to section 261.201(k), the information at issue may not be withheld from this requestor under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of section 261.201(a). *See id.* § 261.201(k). However,

section 261.201(1)(2) states any information that is excepted from required disclosure under the Act or other law must still be withheld from disclosure. *Id.* § 261.201(1)(2). Accordingly, we will consider whether the information is otherwise excepted from disclosure under the Act.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 58.007 of the Family Code, which provides, in pertinent part:

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (d), law enforcement records and files concerning a child and information stored, by electronic means or otherwise, concerning the child from which a record or file could be generated may not be disclosed to the public and shall be:

(1) if maintained on paper or microfilm, kept separate from adult files and records;

(2) if maintained electronically in the same computer system as records or files relating to adults, be accessible under controls that are separate and distinct from 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 Subchapters B, D, and E.

...

(e) Law enforcement records and files concerning a child may be inspected or copied by a juvenile justice agency as that term is defined by Section 58.101, a criminal justice agency as that term is defined by Section 411.082, Government Code, the child, and the child's parent or guardian.

...

(j) Before a child or a child's parent or guardian may inspect or copy a record or file concerning the child under Subsection (e), the custodian of the record or file shall redact:

...

(2) any information that is excepted from required disclosure under [the Act] or other law.

*Id.* § 58.007(c), (e), (j)(2). For purposes of section 58.007(c), “child” means a person who is ten years of age or older and under seventeen years of age at the time of the conduct at issue. *See id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we find the submitted information also involves a child engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision that occurred after September 1, 1997. Therefore, this information is generally confidential under section 58.007(c). However, in this instance, the requestor is a parent of the child offender at issue. As a result, this requestor has a right to inspect information concerning his child under section 58.007(e), and it may not be withheld from him under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c). *See id.* § 58.007(e). Nonetheless, section 58.007(j)(2) provides that information subject to any other exception to disclosure under the Act or law must be redacted. *Id.* § 58.007(j)(2). Thus, we will consider whether the submitted information is otherwise excepted from disclosure under the Act.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) 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 satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Additionally, this office has concluded some kinds of medical information are generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision No. 455 (1987). Further, under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Indus. Found.*, 540 S.W.2d at 682. In considering whether a public citizen’s date of birth is private, the Third Court of Appeals looked to the supreme court’s rationale in *Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts v. Attorney General of Texas*, 354 S.W.3d 336 (Tex. 2010). *Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). The supreme court concluded public employees’ dates of birth are private under section 552.102 of the Government Code because the employees’ privacy interest substantially outweighed the negligible public interest in disclosure.<sup>2</sup> *Texas Comptroller*, 354 S.W.3d at 347-48. Based on *Texas Comptroller*, the court of appeals concluded the privacy rights of public employees apply equally to public citizens, and thus, public citizens’ dates of birth are also protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *City of Dallas*, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3. Upon review, we find the information we have marked satisfies the standard articulated by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation*. In this instance, however, we note the requestor is the spouse of one of the individuals whose privacy interests are at issue. Thus, the requestor may be the authorized representative of that individual, and may have a right of access to information pertaining solely to the individual that would otherwise be

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<sup>2</sup>Section 552.102(a) excepts from disclosure “information in a personnel file, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” Gov’t Code § 552.102(a).

confidential under common-law privacy. Section 552.023(a) states “a person’s authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by a governmental body that relates to the person and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect that person’s privacy interests.” Gov’t Code § 552.023; *see* Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individual requests information concerning himself). Accordingly, if the requestor is acting as the authorized representative of his spouse, then the department may not withhold the portions of the marked information pertaining solely to the requestor’s wife from this requestor under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. If the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of his spouse, then the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. In either event, the department must withhold the information we have marked not pertaining solely to the requestor’s spouse under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We note the remaining information contains information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code, which provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license or permit or motor vehicle title or registration or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release.<sup>3</sup> Gov’t Code § 552.130(a). We note section 552.130 protects privacy interests. As noted above, the requestor is the spouse of one of the individuals whose driver’s license information is at issue and may have a right of access to this information. *See id.* § 552.023; ORD 481. Thus, if the requestor is acting as the authorized representative of the individual at issue, then he has a right of access to the marked driver’s license information pertaining to that individual pursuant to section 552.023, and this information may not be withheld from him under section 552.130. If the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of his spouse, then the department must withhold the driver’s license information we have marked under section 552.130. In either case, the department must withhold the remaining motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130.

In summary, the department must withhold the information we have marked not pertaining solely to the requestor’s spouse under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the remaining information we have marked under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy if the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of his spouse. The department must withhold the driver’s license information we have marked pertaining to the requestor’s spouse under section 552.130 of the Government Code if the requestor is not acting as the authorized representative of his spouse. Regardless, the department must withhold the remaining motor vehicle record

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<sup>3</sup>The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision No. 481, 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.<sup>4</sup>

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](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,



Cristian Rosas-Grillet  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

CRG/bw

Ref: ID# 602278

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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<sup>4</sup>We note the requestor has a right of access beyond that of the general public to some of the information being released. See Fam. Code §§ 58.007(e), 261.201(k); Gov't Code § 552.023(a); ORD 481 at 4.