



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

October 14, 2014

Ms. Susan Fillion  
Assistant County Attorney  
County of Harris  
1019 Congress, 15th Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

OR2014-18305

Dear Ms. Fillion:

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# 539275 (HCSO File No. 14SO600102).

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information regarding a specified case number. You claim 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." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes such as section 58.007 of the Family Code, which provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

(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.

Fam. Code § 58.007(c). Juvenile law enforcement records relating to delinquent conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997, are confidential under section 58.007. *See id.* § 51.03(a) (defining “delinquent conduct”). 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). The submitted information involves children engaged in delinquent conduct that occurred after September 1, 1997. As such, this information constitutes a juvenile law enforcement record that is confidential pursuant to section 58.007(c). It does not appear that any of the exceptions to confidentiality under section 58.007 apply in this instance. Accordingly, we find the submitted information is generally confidential under section 58.007(c).

However, we note the requestor is with the United States Office of Personnel Management (“OPM”). OPM is authorized to perform background investigations of prospective federal employees to ensure applicants have not broken the law or engaged in other conduct making them ineligible for federal employment. *See Mittleman v. Office of Pers. Mgmt.*, 76 F.3d 1240, 1243 (D.C. Cir. 1996); *see also* 5 U.S.C. §§ 3301 (president may prescribe regulations for admission of individuals into civil service), 1304 (investigations conducted by OPM), 1104 (president may delegate personnel management functions to OPM); 5 C.F.R. pts. 731, 732, 736 (authorizing OPM to investigate applicants for federal employment). OPM is subject to Executive Order Number 10,450, which provides, “[t]he appointment of each civilian officer or employee in any department or agency of the Government shall be made subject to investigation.” Exec. Order No. 10, 450, § 3, 18 Fed. Reg. 2489 (Apr. 27, 1953), reprinted as amended in 5 U.S.C. § 7311 (2000). While the scope of the investigation depends on the relation of the employment to national security, “in no event shall the investigation include less than a national agency check (including a check for the fingerprint files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation), and written inquiries to appropriate local law enforcement agencies[.]” *Id.*

OPM has a right to the criminal history record information (“CHRI”) of state and local criminal justice agencies when its investigation is conducted with the consent of the individual being investigated. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 9101(b)(1), (c). CHRI is defined as “information collected by criminal justice agencies on individuals consisting of identifiable descriptions and notations of arrests, indictments, informations, or other formal criminal charges, and any disposition arising therefrom, sentencing, correction supervision and release[.]” but does not include “identification information such as fingerprint records to the extent that such information does not indicate involvement of the individual in the criminal justice system” or “records of a State or locality sealed pursuant to law from access by State and local criminal justice agencies of that State or locality.” *Id.* § 9101(a)(2).

The requestor has submitted to the sheriff's office written consent from the individual under investigation for the release of that individual's CHRI. Furthermore, federal law provides OPM's right of access to CHRI preempts state confidentiality provisions. *Id.* § 9101(b)(4) (section 9101 "shall apply notwithstanding any other provision of law . . . of any State"). Accordingly, we conclude OPM has a right of access to CHRI held by the sheriff's office regarding the individual under investigation. In addition, we conclude such a right of access under federal law preempts the state confidentiality provision you claim under section 58.007 of the Family Code. *See English v. Gen. Elec. Co.*, 496 U.S. 72, 79 (1990) (noting state law is preempted to extent it actually conflicts with federal law); *see also La. Pub. Serv. Comm'n v. FCC*, 476 U.S. 355, 369 (1986) (noting federal agency acting within scope of its congressionally delegated authority may preempt state regulation). As stated above, the submitted information is subject to section 58.007(c) of the Family Code. The sheriff's office must release the CHRI relating to the individual under investigation to the requestor and withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007(c) 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.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,



Kristi L. Godden  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KLG/cbz

Ref: ID# 539275

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)