



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 25, 2015

Mr. Vance Hinds  
Assistant Ellis County & District Attorney  
Ellis County  
109 South Jackson  
Waxahachie, Texas 75165

OR2015-12596

Dear Mr. Hinds:

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# 568551.

The Ellis County Sheriff's Office (the "sheriff's office") received a request for information related to a named individual, including a specified offense report. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, 552.130, and 552.147 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. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes. This section encompasses section 261.201 of the Family Code. Section 261.201(a) provides as follows:

[T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under [the Act] and may be disclosed only for purposes consistent with [the Family 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 pertains to an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. Upon review, we agree this information falls within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201 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) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). You do not indicate the sheriff’s office has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information. Thus, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, we conclude the submitted information is generally confidential under section 261.201 of the Family Code.

We note, however, the requestor is a representative of the Collin County Community Supervision and Corrections Department. Section 261.201(a) provides that information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” *Id.* § 261.201(a). Chapter 411 of the Government Code constitutes “applicable state law” in this instance. Section 411.089(a) of the Government Code provides that “[a] criminal justice agency is entitled to obtain from the [Department of Public Safety] any criminal history record information maintained by the [Department of Public Safety] about a person.” *See Gov’t Code* § 411.089(a). In addition, section 411.087(a) of the Government Code provides in pertinent part the following:

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

...

(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.

*Id.* § 411.087(a)(2). We note “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.” *See id.* § 411.082(2). Thus, the submitted information contains criminal history record information (“CHRI”). However, a criminal justice agency that receives CHRI from another criminal justice agency pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) may only receive such information for a criminal justice purpose. *See id.* §§ 411.083(c), .087(b); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 655 (1997) (discussing limitations on release of criminal history record information). Thus, to the extent the requestor in this instance represents a “criminal justice agency,” she is authorized to obtain criminal history record information from the city’s police department pursuant to section 411.087(a)(2) of the Government Code, but only for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with the Family Code. *See* Gov’t Code §§ 411.083(c), .087(a)(2); *see also* Fam. Code § 261.201(a).

Section 411.082 defines a “criminal justice agency” as including “a federal or state agency that is engaged in the administration of criminal justice under a statute or executive order and that allocates a substantial portion of its annual budget to the administration of criminal justice.” Gov’t Code § 411.082(3)(A). “Administration of criminal justice” has the meaning assigned to it by article 60.01 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. *See id.* § 411.082(1). Article 60.01 defines “administration of criminal justice” as the “performance of any of the following activities: detection, apprehension, pretrial release, post-trial release, prosecution, adjudication, correctional supervision, or rehabilitation of an offender. The term includes criminal identification activities and the collection, storage, and dissemination of criminal history record information.” Code Crim. Proc. art. 60.01(1).

Although it appears the requestor is engaged in the administration of criminal justice for purposes of chapter 411, we are unable to determine whether she intends to use the requested CHRI for a criminal justice purpose. We also are unable to determine whether the requestor intends to use the information for purposes consistent with the Family Code. Consequently, if the sheriff’s office determines the requestor intends to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose and for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the sheriff’s office must release the information that is otherwise subject to section 261.201 of the Family Code and that shows the type of allegation made and whether there was an arrest, information, indictment, detention, conviction, or other formal charges and their dispositions. In that instance, the sheriff’s office must withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. If the sheriff’s office determines the requestor does not intend to use the CHRI for a criminal justice purpose or for purposes consistent with the Family Code, then the sheriff’s office must withhold the submitted information in its entirety pursuant to section 552.101 in conjunction with section 261.201. *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(b)-(g) (listing entities authorized to receive section 261.201 information); Open Records Decision Nos. 655 (1997), 440 at 2 (1986) (construing predecessor statute).<sup>1</sup>

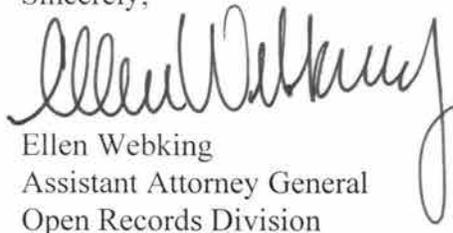
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<sup>1</sup>As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining arguments against disclosure.

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,



Ellen Webking  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EW/akg

Ref: ID# 568551

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)