



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 1, 2016

Mr. Guillermo Trevino  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Fort Worth  
1000 Throckmorton Street, 3rd Floor  
Fort Worth, Texas 76102

OR2016-12428

Dear Mr. Trevino:

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# 612218 (City PIR No. W050112).

The City of Fort Worth (the "city") received a request for all information involving a named individual and a specified address during a specified time period. 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. Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct that occurred on or after September 1, 1997, are confidential under section 58.007. Fam. Code § 58.007(c). The relevant language of section 58.007 reads 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.

*Id.* 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 reported conduct. *See id.* § 51.02(2). Upon review, we find you have failed to demonstrate the submitted information identifies an individual who is ten years of age or older and under the age of seventeen as a suspect or offender of delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision. *See id.* § 51.03(a)-(b) (defining “delinquent conduct” and “conduct indicating a need for supervision”). Therefore, the city may not withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 58.007 of the Family Code.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which 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 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.

*Id.* § 261.201(a). We note the submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of section 261.201); *see also id.* 261.001(1), (4) (defining “abuse” and “neglect” for purposes of section 261.201). Accordingly, we find the submitted information is within the scope of section 261.201(a). Thus, this information is generally confidential under section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

However, the submitted information indicates the requestor is a representative of a child-placing agency that is licensed by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (“DFPS”) in accordance with chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code, and the individual whose information she requested is a prospective foster parent. *See generally* Hum. Res. Code ch. 42. Section 261.201 of the Family Code provides information encompassed by subsection (a) may be disclosed “for purposes consistent with [the Family Code] and applicable federal or state law.” Fam. Code § 261.201(a). Section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code constitutes such “applicable state law.”

A child-placing agency must complete a foster home screening prior to verifying a foster home. *See* 40 T.A.C. § 749.2445(a); *see also* Hum. Res. Code § 42.042(a), (h)-(h-1) (executive commissioner of Health and Human Services Commission shall make rules to carry out provisions of chapter 42, including minimum standards for child-placing agencies). Further, child-placing agencies are required to evaluate a foster home for compliance with licensing rules in certain instances. *See* 40 T.A.C. § 749.2801. As part of the screening or evaluation, the agency must obtain certain information as set forth at section 749.2447. *Id.* §§ 749.2445(c)(1), .2471(1); *cf.* Hum. Res. Code § 42.0561 (providing in part that “[b]efore . . . a child-placing agency may issue a verification certificate for an agency foster home, the . . . child-placing agency must obtain information relating to each family violence report at the applicant’s residence to which a law enforcement agency responded during the 12 months preceding the date of the application. The applicant shall provide the information on a form prescribed by [DFPS].”). Section 749.2447(7) provides a child-placing agency must obtain, document, and assess, in part, the following information:

The results of criminal history and central registry background checks conducted on the prospective foster parents[.] . . . With respect to law enforcement service call information, [the child-placing agency] *must do the following*:

(A) *Obtain service call information from the appropriate law enforcement agency for the prospective foster parents’ addresses for the past two years. Discuss with the prospective foster parents any service call information that [the child-placing agency] obtain[s] from a law enforcement agency and the facts surrounding the incident.*

...

(C) *Assess and document information obtained from law enforcement and any discussion with the prospective foster parents in the foster home screening.*

40 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(A), (C) (emphasis added); *see id.* §§ 749.2445(a), (c)(1), .2471(1); *see also id.* §§ 745.21(8) (defining “child-placing agency”), (32) (defining “permit”), (33)

(defining “permit holder”), 749.41(1) (defining “you” as applicant or permit holder), .43 (words and terms in chapter 749 have meanings assigned under section 745.21). Thus, section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code requires a child-placing agency to obtain all service call information for a two year period for service calls to the addresses of current or prospective foster parents from appropriate law enforcement agencies. *See id.* § 749.2447(7)(A), (C). Accordingly, we find a child-placing agency licensed by DFPS under chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code has a right of access to this information under section 749.2447(7) when it is obtained for the purpose of verifying a current or prospective foster home pursuant to the requirements of section 749.2445 or section 749.2471.

In this instance, the requestor is seeking reports involving a prospective foster parent at the individual’s residence for the previous two years. Accordingly, we conclude the requestor has a right of access to the submitted information pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code. However, as noted above, section 261.201(a) states any release must be “for purposes consistent with the Family Code.” *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(a). We find release of the information at issue to this requestor is for a purpose consistent with the Family Code. Therefore, pursuant to section 749.2447(7) of title 40 of the Texas Administrative Code, the city may not withhold this information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. Although you seek to withhold portions of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy, a specific statutory right of access prevails over the common law. *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); *see also CenterPoint Energy Houston Elec. LLC v. Harris County Toll Rd. Auth.*, 436 F.3d 541, 544 (5th Cir. 2006) (common law controls only where there is no conflicting or controlling statutory law). As you raise no further exceptions to disclosure, the city must release the submitted information.<sup>1</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

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<sup>1</sup>Because this requestor has a special right of access to the information being released, if the city receives another request for this same information from a different requestor, the city must again seek a ruling from this office. *See* 40 T.A.C. § 749.2447(7)(A), (C).

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 'Tim Neal', with a stylized, cursive script.

Tim Neal  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

TN/bw

Ref: ID# 612218

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)