



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 3, 2016

Ms. Cynthia Rincón
Fort Bend Independent School District
16431 Lexington Boulevard
Sugar Land, Texas 77479

OR2016-17491

Dear Ms. Rincón:

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# 621019 (FBISD ORR# 2015-16-1162).

The Fort Bend Independent School District (the "district") received a request for information pertaining to a named individual. You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 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 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 section 261.201(a) of the Family Code, which provides 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 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.

Fam. Code § 261.201(a). The submitted information was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. *See id.* § 261.001(1) (defining “abuse” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code); *see also id.* § 101.003(a) (defining “child” for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code 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). We note the district is not an agency authorized to conduct an investigation under chapter 261 of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.103 (listing agencies that may conduct child abuse investigations). However, upon review, we find the submitted information consists of an investigation of alleged child abuse made by the district’s police department. *See id.* Accordingly, the submitted information falls within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. As you do not indicate the department has adopted a rule that governs the release of this type of information, we assume that no such regulation exists. Therefore, we find the submitted information is generally confidential under section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.

However, section 261.201 of the Family Code also 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). We note the requestor is an investigator with the TEA, which has assumed the duties of the State Board for Educator Certification (the “SBEC”).¹ The requestor claims section 22.082 of the Education Code gives the SBEC a right to the requested information and indicates the requested information is related to an SBEC investigation of an individual who has applied for or currently holds educator credentials.² Section 22.082 of the Education Code provides the SBEC “may obtain from any law enforcement or criminal justice agency all criminal history record information and all records contained in any closed criminal investigation file that relate to a specific applicant for or holder of a certificate issued under Subchapter B, Chapter 21.” Educ. Code § 22.082. You state the case at issue is closed. Thus, as the submitted information consists of a closed criminal investigation of an applicant for or a holder of a certificate issued under subchapter B, Chapter 21 of the Education Code, we find section 22.082 of the Education Code gives the TEA a statutory right of access to the submitted information in its entirety. *See id.*

¹The 79th Texas legislature passed House Bill 1116, which required the transfer of SBEC’s administrative functions and services to TEA, effective September 1, 2005.

²The requestor also claims a right to the information at issue under sections 261.308 and 261.406 of the Family Code. However, these statutes apply to information held by the Department of Family and Protective Services and not the department. *See* Fam. Code §§ 261.308, .406.

However, section 261.201(a) states the release must be “for purposes consistent with the Family Code.” *See* Fam. Code § 261.201(a). This office cannot determine whether release of the submitted information is consistent with the Family Code. Consequently, if the district determines release of the submitted information is not consistent with the Family Code, then the district must withhold the submitted information in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. *See id.* § 261.201(b)-(g), (i), (k) (listing circumstances under which section 261.201 information can be released); Attorney General Opinions DM-353 at 4 n.6 (1995) (finding interagency transfer of information prohibited where confidentiality statute enumerates specific entities to which release of information is authorized and where potential receiving governmental body is not among statute’s enumerated entities), JM-590 at 4-5 (1986). If the district determines release of the submitted information is consistent with the Family Code, then section 261.201 does not prohibit the release of the submitted information to the requestor in this case. Although you also claim the submitted information is excepted under section 552.108 of the Government Code, a specific statutory right of access to information prevails over general exceptions to disclosure under the Act. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 613 at 4 (1993), 451 (1986) (specific statutory right of access provisions overcome general exceptions to disclosure under the Act). Therefore, the district may not withhold the submitted information pursuant to section 552.108. Nevertheless, in that situation, we must consider whether the submitted information is otherwise excepted from disclosure.

We note the submitted information contains information subject to section 552.130 of the Government Code.³ Section 552.130 provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, 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. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130. Section 552.130 specifically protects motor vehicle record information and contains its own access provisions. Therefore, we find section 552.130 is not a general exception under the Act. Accordingly, the district must generally withhold the motor vehicle record information we have marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

Because the submitted information includes information that is confidential under section 552.130 of the Government Code, we must consider whether the requestor in this case, as a TEA investigator, may nevertheless obtain the information at issue. Section 22.082 of the Education Code authorizes the requestor to obtain information in its entirety, while section 552.130 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure portions of the submitted information. Thus, we find section 22.082 is in conflict with section 552.130 of the Government Code. Where information falls within both a general and specific provision of law, the specific provision prevails over the general. *See Horizon/CMS*

³The 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 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

Healthcare Corp. v. Auld, 34 S.W.3d 887, 901 (Tex. 2000) (“more specific statute controls over the more general”); *Cuellar v. State*, 521 S.W.2d 277 (Tex. Crim. App. 1975) (under well-established rule of statutory construction, specific statutory provisions prevail over general ones); ORD 451.

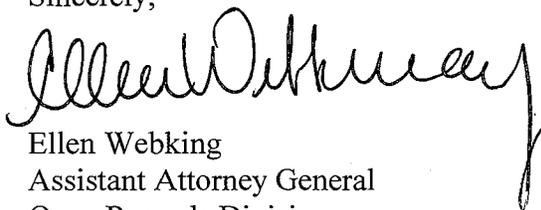
Although section 22.082 of the Education Code generally allows a TEA investigator access to files of a closed criminal investigation, section 552.130 of the Government Code specifically protects motor vehicle record information. This section specifically permits release to certain parties and in circumstances that do not include the TEA representative’s request in this instance. Therefore, we conclude, notwithstanding section 22.082 of the Education Code, the district must withhold the motor vehicle record information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code.

In summary, if the district determines the release of the submitted information at issue is not consistent with the Family Code, then the submitted information must be withheld in its entirety under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201 of the Family Code. If the district determines the release of information is consistent with the Family Code, then the district must withhold the motor vehicle record information we marked under section 552.130 of the Government Code and must release the remaining information to this requestor pursuant to section 22.082 of the Education 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, 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/bw

Ref: ID# 621019

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)