



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 1, 2016

Ms. Alexis G. Allen
Counsel for the Rowlett Police Department
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith, L.L.P.
1800 Ross Tower
500 North Akard Street
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2016-19813

Dear Ms. Allen:

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# 628395 (Ref. No. 77889).

The Rowlett Police Department (the "department"), which you represent, received a request for any records involving a named individual from a specified time frame. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.130 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. This section encompasses 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. This office has found a compilation of an individual's criminal history is highly embarrassing information, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person. *Cf. United States Dep't of Justice v. Reporters Comm. for Freedom of the Press*, 489 U.S. 749, 764 (1989) (when considering prong regarding individual's privacy interest, court recognized distinction between public records found in

courthouse files and local police stations and compiled summary of information and noted that individual has significant privacy interest in compilation of one's criminal history). Furthermore, we find a compilation of a private citizen's criminal history is generally not of legitimate concern to the public. However, information that refers to an individual solely as a victim, witness, or involved person is not a compilation of the individual's criminal history and may not be withheld under section 552.101 on that basis.

The present request seeks all records pertaining to a named individual. This request requires the department to compile the named individual's criminal history and implicates the named individual's right to privacy. Therefore, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records listing the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. However, we note the department has submitted information that does not list the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant. This information does not consist of a compilation of the named individual's criminal history, and the department may not withhold it under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy on that basis. Accordingly, we will address the applicability of other exceptions to disclosure of this information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code also encompasses information protected by section 261.201 of the Family Code, which provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following information is confidential, is not subject to public release under Chapter 552, Government Code, 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 information we have marked was used or developed in an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect. *See id.* §§ 101.003(a) (defining "child" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code), 261.001(1), (4) (defining "abuse" and "neglect" for purposes of chapter 261 of the Family Code). Accordingly, the information is within the scope of section 261.201 of the Family Code. Because we have no indication the department has adopted a rule governing the release of this type of information, we assume no such regulation exists. Given that assumption, the submitted information is confidential pursuant to section 261.201(a) of the Family Code. *See Open Records Decision*

No. 440 at 2 (1986) (predecessor statute). Accordingly, the department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) of the Family Code.¹

In summary, to the extent the department maintains law enforcement records listing the named individual as a suspect, arrestee, or criminal defendant, the department must withhold such information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The department must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 261.201(a) 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, 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,



Brian E. Berger
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

BB/akg

Ref: ID# 628395

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address your other arguments to withhold this information.