



September 9, 2002

Ms. Sylvia F. Hardman  
Deputy Commissioner for Legal Services  
Texas Rehabilitation Commission  
4900 North Lamar Boulevard  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399

OR2002-5022

Dear Ms. Hardman:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 168313.

The Texas Rehabilitation Commission (the "commission") received a request for copies of the "questions [and] expected responses, my responses, selectee's responses, [and] final selection matrix" with regard to a specified job posting. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and have reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.122(b) excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. In Open Records Decision No. 626 (1994), this office determined that the term "test item" in section 552.122 includes any standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated, but does not encompass evaluations of an employee's overall job performance or suitability. Whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *See id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Additionally, when answers to test questions might reveal the substance of the questions themselves, the answers may be withheld from disclosure under section 552.122(b). *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

Based on our review of your arguments and the information at issue, we agree that questions two, four, seven, and eight constitute "test items" as contemplated by section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. Accordingly, we conclude that the commission may withhold these questions from disclosure pursuant to section 552.122(b). We also agree that the commission may withhold the expected responses associated with each of these questions from disclosure pursuant to section 552.122(b), as they tend to reveal the substance of each test question. However, since the remaining questions do not constitute "test items" under section 552.122(b), the commission may not withhold these questions or their respective expected responses from disclosure under section 552.122(b). Consequently, the commission must release the remaining submitted information to the requestor.

You have asked that we issue to the commission a previous determination allowing the commission to withhold interview questions and model answers without requesting a ruling. As noted above, whether information falls within the section 552.122 exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *See* Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). For this reason, we decline to issue a previous determination that would grant the commission the authority to withhold categorically all interview questions and answers.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839.

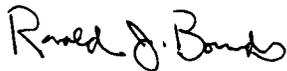
The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Bounds  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

RJB/seg

Ref: ID# 168313

Enc. Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Pamela K. Chisholm  
2306 Silverleaf Cove  
Round Rock, Texas 78664  
(w/o enclosures)