



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

May 30, 2007

Ms. Patricia Fleming  
Assistant General Counsel  
Office of the General Counsel  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
P. O. Box 4004  
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2007-06747

Dear Ms. Fleming:

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# 279654.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for copies of the interview questions and responses for each applicant that applied for the position of Administrative Assistant IV Intake Coordinator at the Byrd-Diagnostic Unit on a specified date. You claim that the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.122(b) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure test items developed by a licensing agency or governmental body. Gov't Code § 552.122(b). 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. *Id.* Traditionally, this office has applied section 552.122 where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Section 552.122 also protects the answers to test questions when the answers might reveal the questions

themselves. *See* Attorney General Opinion JM-640 at 3 (1987); Open Records Decision No. 626 at 8 (1994).

The department claims that the submitted oral interview questions are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122(b). You state that the questions are intended to display the technical expertise of the applicants and “are devices by which the applicant’s knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated in order to assure that the most qualified people are selected for the open positions.” Having considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information, we find that interview question number 5 qualifies as a test item under section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. We also find that the release of the model and actual answers to question number 5 would tend to reveal the question itself. Therefore, the department may withhold question number 5 along with the corresponding model and actual answers, pursuant to section 552.122(b) of the Government Code. However, we find that the remaining interview questions are general questions evaluating applicants’ individual abilities, personal opinions, and subjective ability to respond to a particular situation, and do not test any specific knowledge of an applicant. Accordingly, the remaining interview questions, as well as the model and actual answers to the questions, may not be withheld from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. As no further exceptions to disclosure are made, the remaining interview questions, corresponding model and actual answers must be released.

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, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, 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 Dep't of Pub. 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 Office of the Attorney General 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. 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,



Jordan Johnson  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JJ/jb

Ref: ID# 279654

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Ms. Sharon D. Allen  
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(w/o enclosures)