



May 12, 2000

Mr. James L. Hall
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342

OR2000-1884

Dear Mr. Hall:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 135935.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice ("TDCJ") received a request for the interview questions related to the job posting for a Technical Writer I position. You claim that three of the requested oral test questions¹ are excepted from disclosure under section 552.122 of the Government Code. We assume that you have released all other responsive information to the requestor. Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302. We have considered the exception you claim and 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(b) 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. Section 552.122 applies where release of "test items" might compromise the effectiveness of future examinations. *Id.* at 4-5; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 118 (1976). Whether information falls within the section 552.122(b) exception must be determined on a case-by-case basis. ORD 626.

After careful review, we agree that the sample oral examination questions and answers are protected "test items" that "measure the skill, knowledge, intelligence, capacities, or aptitudes of an individual" and are a "standard means by which an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area is evaluated." Open Records Decision No. 626 at 6 (1994). Thus, TDCJ may withhold the examination questions and answers under section 552.122(b).

¹Though it is unclear from your letter that TDCJ wishes to withhold the answers to the test questions as well as the questions themselves, we base this analysis on the presumption that you do.

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.

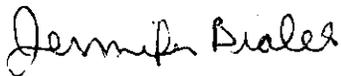
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge 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).

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,



Jennifer Bialek
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHB/CHS/ljp

Ref: ID# 135935

Encl. Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Helen Alexander
P.O. Box 6185
Huntsville, Texas 77342-6185
(w/o enclosures)