



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

May 4, 2005

Mr. James M. Frazier, III
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342

OR2005-03865

Dear Mr. Frazier:

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# 223256.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for copies of a named individual's application and two interview documentation forms related to a particular job posting. 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.

As a preliminary matter, we note you have not submitted any information related to the first portion of the request, nor have you raised any exceptions to disclosure for such information. Therefore, we assume that, to the extent this information exists, it has been released to the requestor. If not, the department must release it immediately. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.006, .301, .302; Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (concluding that section 552.221(a) requires that information not excepted from disclosure must be released as soon as possible under the circumstances).

We now turn to your arguments regarding the submitted information. Section 552.122 of the Government Code excepts from required public disclosure "a test item developed by a . . . 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. *Id.* at 6. The question of whether specific information falls within the scope of section 552.122(b) 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).

Having reviewed the questions at issue, we agree that questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 evaluate an individual's or group's knowledge or ability in a particular area. Furthermore, we find that the answers to these questions might reveal the questions themselves. Therefore pursuant to section 552.122 of the Government Code, the department may withhold questions 1, 2, 3, and 5 as well as the corresponding preferred and actual answers. The remaining submitted information must be released.¹

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

¹We note that the submitted information also includes the requestor's social security number. As the laws protecting this type of information are designed to protect an individual's privacy interest, the requestor has a special right of access to her own information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.023. We note that the department must again seek a decision from this office if it receives another request for the same information from another requestor.

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); *Tex. 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 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,



L. Joseph James
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

LJJ/seg

Ref: ID# 223256

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Randall Brin
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(w/o enclosures)