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HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE

FOR THE

FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR

50222

WRITTEN EXAMINATION

State Personnel Department
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HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR - 50222 WRITTEN EXAMINATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A written examination is being given for the FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR classification. The purpose of this guide is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need at the time of the exam will be provided when you take the exam, you will not be allowed to bring this guide with you to the exam.

II. JOB PREVIEW

The FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR classification has a pay range of \$33,902.40 - \$51,376.80. This classification is used by the Department of Human Resources in county offices throughout the state. Availability of these positions varies within office locations.

The FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR job involves supervisory financial support social work. Employees in this class supervise professional social workers in public assistance, food stamp, child support, and work and training service programs within a county office. They may also supervise technical and clerical staff.

III. HOW THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION WAS DEVELOPED

A study of the FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR classification was conducted prior to the development of the examination. A number of employees who work in this class and their supervisors participated in the study. When the information was completed, the results showed that a new employee in the classification of FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR must be able to perform several important duties. Some of these are listed below.

- ⇒ Supervise professional social workers, clerical staff, and technical support staff.
- ⇒ Assign cases to social workers according to departmental guidelines and professional standards.
- ⇒ Review social workers' case files to ensure compliance with federal, state, and departmental regulations.
- ⇒ Monitor social workers' caseloads.
- ⇒ Consult on difficult cases as needed.

The study also showed that several knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are associated with the above activities. These knowledges, skills, and abilities have been grouped together into seven dimensions. These dimensions are described below.

- 1. Computational Skills - This includes the ability to detect errors and discrepancies in records.**
- 2. Reading Skills - This includes the ability to read and comprehend information and apply concepts to work activities.**
- 3. Written Communication Skills - This includes the ability to prepare letters, memoranda, case files, etc.**
- 4. Spoken Communications Skills - This includes knowledge of terminology used within the**

Department of Human Resources.

5. **Scheduling and Coordinating Skills - This includes the ability to schedule multiple activities, determine priorities, and coordinate delivery of services.**
6. **Work and Organizational Adaptation Skills - This includes understanding the relationships among units within DHR and knowledge of legal restraints concerning sensitive information.**
7. Interpersonal Relations Skills - This includes relating to clients, co-workers, superiors, and the general public as needed.

The examination for FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR will measure the dimensions in **bold print**. The KSAs found in the dimensions that are not in bold print must be demonstrated during the probationary period if you are hired into the FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR position. For the purposes of the examination, the seven dimensions were divided into four sections: Math/Error Detection, English/ Reading Comprehension, DHR Knowledge, and Planning/Organizing.

IV. SAMPLE TEST ITEMS

The FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR exam is divided into four sections: Math/Error Detection, English/Reading Comprehension, DHR Knowledge, and Planning/Organizing.

To test your **math/error detection skills**, you will be given several sets of numerical data. These data sets will be presented as a table of numbers, a mathematical formula, or in narrative form. Use the information provided to answer the questions.

Example 1

200 applicants have applied for food stamps. 112 of these applicants are female, and the rest are male. 37 female applicants and 28 male applicants qualify for food stamps.

What percentage of female applicants qualified for food stamps?

- (A) 14%
- (B) 18%
- (C) 25%
- (D) 33%

Answer **(D)** is correct. According to the information provided, there were 112 total female applicants, 37 of which qualified for food stamps. 37 is 33% of 112.

To test your **reading comprehension skills**, you will answer questions that will test your ability to read and comprehend written information.

Example 2

You are given a short paragraph. Read the paragraph and then select from the four options the statement that best summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.

To produce effective business letters, a correspondent should always formulate in his or her mind, or on paper, a simple but definite plan of what to say and how to say it.

According to the passage, which statement is true?

- (A) Some preparation for writing a letter is necessary.
- (B) There should be no direct dictation.
- (C) More attention should be given to the proper form than to content.
- (D) You do not need preparation in writing a letter.

Answer (A) is correct. The passage indicates that effective business letters require a correspondent to formulate a plan of what to say and how to say it.

To test your **English skills**, you will be asked questions that will test your knowledge of Standard English.

Example 3

You will be given four versions of the same sentence. Read each version of the sentence, and then select the one sentence in the group of four that best approximates standard American English usage.

- (A) Last week, Michael walks every day for an hour.
- (B) Last week, Michael is walking every day for an hour.
- (C) Last week, Michael walked every day for an hour.
- (D) Last week, Michael walk every day for an hour.

Answer (C) is correct. The correct verb tense for the sentence is “walked.”

To test your **DHR knowledge**, you will be asked questions pertaining to the Department of Human Resources.

Example 4

The simplest way for a social worker to verify understanding of a client’s answer is to:

- (A) Repeat the answer and ask the client to confirm.
- (B) Ask the client to rephrase the answer in another way.
- (C) Reduce all facts to writing as soon as possible.
- (D) Tell the client to explain things more clearly.

The correct answer is (A). The simplest way to verify understanding of an answer is to repeat the answer and ask the client for confirmation.

To test your **planning/organizing skills**, you will be given a series of scenarios and asked to make decisions based on the information provided.

Example 5

Read the situation and answer the following questions based on the information provided.

Your supervisor will be out of the office today. You arrived at work at 8:00 am. You have an appointment today at 11:00 am with your family doctor who has advised you that the appointment should not be rescheduled. You need to leave by 10:30 am and will not return to the office. Michelle Thomas, an Administrative Support Assistant I, is the only other employee in the office today. However, she does not type. Your supervisor left a note listing the following tasks that must be completed today:

1. Type the Anderson report (2 hours to complete).
2. Sort and distribute mail (30 minutes to complete).
3. Call Miriam Houston about the Anderson report (10 minutes to complete).
4. Post the new dividend rates by 12 noon today (20 minutes to complete).
5. Set up the conference room for the next day's 8:00 am meeting (20 minutes to complete).
6. File dividend reports (2 hours to complete).

Which of the following tasks would you be forced to perform yourself?

- (A) File dividend reports
- (B) Set up the conference room
- (C) Type the Anderson report
- (D) Sort and distribute the day's mail

The correct answer is (C). Since Ms. Thomas cannot type, you must type the Anderson report. Ms. Thomas can do A, B, and D.

V. STUDY SUGGESTIONS

You may find some of the following ideas helpful in preparing for the exam.

⇒ Make up your own tests and take them.

⇒ Pretend that you are in a real testing situation and try not to talk to anyone else while you are taking the sample tests.

⇒ Practice following instructions. Read sections of how-to books or instruction manuals you may have at home and practice taking notes or highlighting important aspects of the sections.

⇒ Study the Sample Test Items in this How to Prepare Guide.

VI. EXAM ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Do **NOT** bring this Guide to the exam location. You will not be permitted to bring it in the testing room.

Do **NOT** bring any of your study materials to the exam. This includes notes, manuals, and other study materials.

Please remember to bring the NOTIFICATION CARD/LETTER that you will receive from the State of Alabama Personnel Department to the exam.

To protect your own interests, you need to bring PICTURE IDENTIFICATION to the exam location. This might be a valid driver's license, a military identification card, a student identification card, or some form of picture identification. You only need to have one form of PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.

You will not be allowed to enter the exam location or take the exam without your NOTIFICATION CARD/LETTER and PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.

Bring several number 2 pencils with erasers to the exam. It is also recommended that you bring a highlighter pen. You may bring a calculator to use for the Financial Support Supervisor examination. Small solar powered or battery operated calculators that perform basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, or percentages are allowed. Calculators that plug-in, utilize tape, have word processing, spelling, thesauruses, or other storage and retrieval capabilities (except basic memory functions) are not allowed. *Calculators that are a feature on a cell phone are not permitted.* Calculators are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.

VII. TAKING THE EXAM

Use your time efficiently. The exam is not a test of how quickly you can answer questions. However, there will be a **3-hour** time limit allowed for the exam. In the parts of the test that require reading, try to keep a steady pace. Try to finish as much of the test as you can.

While reading passages, you may want to take a few notes. Make your notes brief. You may also want to underline or highlight important information as you read.

Don't give up. Many people give up too easily on tests. If the question or problem seems hard, they do not even try. Mark an answer on your answer sheet even if it is a guess. You will not be penalized for guessing. On the other hand, do not spend too much time on any one question just because it is hard. This may not leave you enough time to answer questions that you know.

VIII. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

If you would like to request special testing accommodation or have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334)242-3389.

IX. BANDED SCORING

When the written exam for FINANCIAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands.

When you receive notification of how you did on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (e.g., You will not receive a score of 95 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band your score fell. The following is information to help you understand the banding procedure.

What is banding?

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about difference in the ability to do the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and mathematically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

Misconceptions about Banding

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.

The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically, there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times, it may be very small. We do not force bands to be a certain size. The size of the bands are based on the scores candidates make.

Misconception: Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.

Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Think of a band as a group of scores that statistically are not meaningfully different. In school, two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into a band called "A" because the teacher cannot be sure that .2 is a real difference in achievement. Think of scores on achievement tests children take in school. The fine print on the tests always cautions you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score which uses some grouping technique such as percentiles, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding.

Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.

Band 1 does not equate to an A, Band 2 a B, and so forth. In school, a predetermined numerical score (e.g. 92-100) equals an A. In banding, scores are banded only in relation to one another. Unlike grade school bands, the width of bands is not set in advance. You compete against your peers only. Your scores are set in relation to your peers only.

Misconception: A band score on one test has the same value as a band score on another test.

Banded scores are test-specific and cannot be compared to banded scores on other tests.

Misconception: People who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.

Time spent in a job may not be the same as skill in doing the job. The people with the strongest skills (or who did the best on the exam) should be in the top bands. Some of these people will have been in the job longer than others. Years of service do not always equal proficiency.

Misconception: A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.

This statement is false. A band score of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. The true test of your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

Misconception: Banding replaced the “Rule of 10.”

Banding did not replace the “Rule of 10.” This rule determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied). Now, all of the scores within a band are considered tied.

Misconception: People in a band do not differ.

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to separate them.

X. TEST RESULTS

Four to six weeks after completing the exam, you will receive a Notice of Examination Results postcard in the mail. This postcard will identify your score, or Band placement, for the written exam. If you have not received your score within four to six weeks, you should call the State Personnel Department.

In addition to your Band placement, you may also obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at www.personnel.alabama.gov. From the home page, you should click on “Applicants” and the “Register Standings”, and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.

XI. RESCHEDULING A WRITTEN EXAMINATION

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written test.