

# HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE



## YOUTH SERVICES SENIOR AIDE-60805 WRITTEN EXAMINATION

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# HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE YOUTH SERVICES SENIOR AIDE - 60805 WRITTEN EXAMINATION

## I. INTRODUCTION

A written examination is being given for the Youth Services Senior Aide 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 have this guide with you at the exam.

## II. JOB PREVIEW

The Youth Services Senior Aide classification has a pay range of \$25,821.60 - \$38,347.20. This classification is used by the Department of Youth Services.

The Youth Services Senior Aide job is beginning-level professional work in the supervision and social development of delinquent youth. Employees in this class assist students in social interaction adjustment and are responsible for controlling and maintaining custody of students and safeguarding them from other students. Employees also coordinate the intake/orientation process for students entering a campus, review case records and reports, and perform general administrative duties as assigned by the supervisor.

## III. HOW THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION WAS DEVELOPED

A study of the Youth Services Senior Aide 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 an employee at entry in the classification of Youth Services Senior Aide must be able to perform several important duties. Some of these are listed below.

- ✓ Writes incident/critical incident reports, log entries, and other documents in order to ensure proper documentation or youth/staff activities.
- ✓ Completes forms such as youth interview intake forms and incident reports in order to ensure that youth activities and progress are properly maintained.
- ✓ Reads documents in order to remain informed on policies, procedures, and guidelines and ensure proper procedures are being followed.
- ✓ Manages employee activities in the absence of the unit manager in order to provide direction, instructions and exchange of information.

The study also showed that several knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are associated with the above activities. These KSAs are described below.

- ✓ Knowledge of youths' social and medical backgrounds to include family background, diet, medications, and allergies as needed to provide social and therapeutic programs for youth.
- ✓ **Knowledge of English to include grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and form** as needed to compose letters and memoranda, proofread information for accuracy, and develop, revise, and complete forms.
- ✓ Knowledge of confidentiality specific to youth records and employee files as needed to minimize/eliminate liability.
- ✓ Knowledge of the American Correctional Association (ACA) and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards as needed to ensure that programs are in compliance with standards specified for juvenile offenders.

- ✓ Ability to communicate orally in one-on-one and group situations such as counseling sessions, instructional situations, staff meetings and team sports as needed to answer questions, resolve conflicts, exchange information, and provide direction and instructions.
- ✓ Ability to compose correspondence such as letters, memoranda, and reports to include writing with appropriate clarity, content, conciseness, grammatical and spelling accuracy as needed to exchange information with co-workers, youth, and their families.
- ✓ **Ability to identify and make appropriate decisions** as needed to prioritize tasks and achieve departmental goals and objectives.
- ✓ Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with various persons such as co-workers, the general public, youth, and their families as needed to promote group dynamics, improve performance, enhance morale, and achieve departmental goals and objectives.
- ✓ **Ability to plan/organize** to include managing time, prioritizing job tasks, and planning strategically as needed to meet deadlines and achieve departmental goals and objectives.
- ✓ Ability to operate office equipment such as copier, telephone, calculator, computer, and facsimile machine as needed to document and access information, maximize work time, transmit information, and store/analyze information.
- ✓ **Ability to read and comprehend narrative information** such as facility regulations and policy and procedures manuals as needed to interpret rules, ensure compliance with regulations, exchange information, and achieve departmental goals.
- ✓ Ability to remain calm in tense and conflicting situations as needed to resolve situations, provide support and gain cooperation.
- ✓ **Ability to perform basic mathematical calculations** such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and percentages as needed to verify statistics and complete reports and forms.
- ✓ Ability to keep accurate and clear records/documentation as needed to ensure youth information is correct and current.
- ✓ Ability to understand, observe, and report conditions of confinement as needed to facilitate and maintain a safe, clean, and therapeutic environment.

The examination for Youth Services Senior Aide will measure the KSAs 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 Youth Services Senior Aide position.

#### IV. SAMPLE TEST ITEMS

The Youth Services Senior Aide exam is divided into five sections: Mathematics, Reading Comprehension, Knowledge of English, Ability to compose correspondence, and Planning/Organizing.

To test your **math 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

Solve:  $163 / 21 = ?$

- (A) 6.52
- (B) 7.76
- (C) 7.89
- (D) 8.15

Answer **(B)** is correct.  $163 / 21$  is 7.76.

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.

Juvenile delinquency is commonly thought of as indicating some degree of pathology within a community. It is, by definition, a departure from a behavior code or norm approved by the larger society, even when representing, for the child concerned, conformity to the standards of his immediate social group or groups. The conventional civic and law-enforcing bodies, therefore, consider delinquency a social problem requiring more or less constant attention to achieve any reduction in the rate.

According to the preceding statement, juvenile delinquency can be reduced only by:

- (A) Steady attention
- (B) Enactment of behavior codes
- (C) Conventional civic and law-enforcing bodies
- (D) Conforming to social group standards

Answer **(A)** is correct. The passage indicates that social problem needs constant attention to achieve a reduction in the problem.

To test your **knowledge of English**, you will answer questions that will test your knowledge of Standard English.

**Example 3**

In the following question, an asterisk (\*) replaces a punctuation mark. Select the letter that indicates the missing punctuation mark.

Mr. Smith's desk, I believe (\*) was previously in the far corner.

- (A) semicolon (;)
- (B) comma (.)
- (C) colon (:)
- (D) double quotation mark (")

Answer **(B)** is correct. The correct punctuation mark is a comma.

To test your **ability to compose correspondence**, you will be presented information that will ask you to choose the sentence that best represents standard English grammar.

**Example 4**

Select the response that indicates the clearest and most concise use of standard American English.

- (A) Neither the table nor the chairs are in the right place.
- (B) Neither the table nor the chairs is in the right place.
- (C) Neither the table or the chairs are in the right place.
- (D) Neither the table or the chairs is in the right place.

Answer **(A)** is correct. This represents the most grammatically correct sentence.

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 question based on the information provided.

Your supervisor has provided you with mandatory deadlines for certain job tasks as shown in the table below.

TASKS	DEADLINES
Complete intake forms and incidents reports	2:00 p.m. daily
Basic Living Skills Class	3:00 p.m. daily
Turn in completed daily student reports	4:00 p.m. daily
Attend mandatory staff meeting	9:00 a.m. every Friday

It is 2:20 p.m. on Thursday. Your next task should be to:

- (A) Complete intake forms and incidents reports
- (B) Basic Living Skills Class
- (C) Attend mandatory staff meeting
- (D) Turn in completed daily student reports

The correct answer is **(B)**. This is the only task due after 2:00 p.m. and before 3:00 p.m.

## 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.
- ✓ **You must bring the test-scheduling card** that you will receive from the State Personnel Department to the exam. This card lists the examination title, location of exam, and date, day, and time of examination.
- ✓ **You must also bring picture identification** to the exam location. This may be your driver license, a military identification card, or a passport.
- ✓ **You will not be allowed to enter the exam location or take the exam without your NOTIFICATION CARD AND PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.**
- ✓ **Bring several number 2 pencils with erasers** to the exam. It is also recommended that you bring a **highlighter**.
- ✓ You may bring a calculator to use for the exam. 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 are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.

If you need testing accommodations due to a health problem or disability, please contact the State Personnel Department at (334) 242-3389.

# TEST-TAKING TIPS

- ✓ **Listen** to the test monitors and follow their instructions carefully.
- ✓ If you are not sure of an answer, **go with your first choice**.
- ✓ Work through the test **without spending too much time on any one item**.
- ✓ If you cannot decide on the best answer to a question, **skip it and go back to it later**.
- ✓ Use your watch or the clock in the room to **keep track of your time** during the test.
- ✓ It is to your advantage to **answer as many questions as possible**, even if you must guess. There is no penalty for guessing.
- ✓ **Mark your answers on the answer sheet and NOT in the test booklet**. Only answers clearly marked on the answer sheet will be given credit.
- ✓ If you have a question at any time before or during the exam, **ask the monitor for assistance**.

## VII. BANDED SCORING

When the written exam for Youth Services Senior Aide is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided 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 differences in the ability to perform 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 statistically. 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.***

We do not force bands to be a certain size. 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 small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

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

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

***Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.***

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an "A," Band 2 to a "B," and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

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

Banded scores are test specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, he/she may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates' scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

**Misconception:** *People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.*  
People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

**Misconception:** *A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.*  
A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. Therefore, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The true test of success in 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." The "Rule of 10" 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) while 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 at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.

## VIII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Are there any vacancies for the Youth Services Senior Aide?*

You may contact the Department of Youth Services' Personnel Division in order to get information on current or future vacancies.

### *How are vacancies filled for the Youth Services Senior Aide?*

The top ten applicant's name on the register are sent to the Department of Youth Services for consideration. Since the banded scoring process is used, all of the scores within a band are considered tied. Therefore, all names within a band are certified out to the agency, which may include more than 10 names. The names of people not selected stay on the register to be considered for future jobs. Persons are usually hired at the minimum of the pay range.

### *How long will I remain eligible for appointment?*

If you pass the examination, your name will remain on the employment register two years after you are placed on it. You will be notified by mail when to reapply.

### *How can I find out my standing on the register?*

You may check your standing by going to the State Personnel Web page at [www.personnel.alabama.gov](http://www.personnel.alabama.gov) and clicking the link on the home page. You will be required to enter some information, and you will receive an email the following business day with your standing.

### *How long will it take for me to receive a score?*

It typically takes from 4 to 6 weeks to calculate final grades following a test administration. When final grades have been calculated, all candidates are sent a score card in the mail containing their grade from the examination. If you determine that all other candidates have received their score cards and you have not, please call the State Personnel Department. We will check your mailing address and, if necessary, send you a new score card or a letter with your grade enclosed.