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THE MILE HIGH CITY

Pre Employment Test Resource

&

Information Guide

Developed by the

**Workforce Management Division
Test Research & Development Unit
City and County of Denver**

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Introduction

Congratulations on taking a step towards your career advancement with Career Service Authority and the City and County of Denver. This manual has been developed to help you prepare for a Career Service exam.

Frequently, we receive requests from candidates asking us for help in preparing to take a Career Service test. Being prepared to take a test is an important part of the testing process. This manual will answer many of the questions that you may have regarding our testing process. In this manual, you will find information on the type of tests that we generally give at Career Service, helpful hints on the best ways to prepare for a test, links to test preparation resources and study tutorials, techniques for reducing test anxiety, how to obtain test accommodations if you have a disability, and the types of information that is covered in our written exams.

We anticipate that you will find this manual helpful in your preparation for city employment or in the promotional process within the city. We wish you the best of luck in your new opportunity.

Sincerely,

Test Research and Development Unit

Workforce Management Division

Career Service Authority



Overview of Testing at Career Service Authority

Organizations large and small use various forms of pre employment testing to predict or assess how well an individual may perform on the job (candidate's job performance). Pre employment testing shows that the organization has really thought through what it wants in the person for the job. These types of tests measure knowledge, skills, abilities (KSA's) or competencies necessary to perform a particular job. They come in many different forms, ranging from a written paper and pencil knowledge exam, to performance testing such as the ability to operate machinery, to tests that measure your previous experience through a series of job related essay type questions.

The Workforce Management Division of Career Service Authority (CSA) is charged with fairly and objectively developing, validating and administering all pre employment tests within the City and County of Denver. The types of tests administered at Career Service Authority are developed in accordance with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection and are validated to predict job performance in the most fair, useful, reliable and efficient manner possible. It is the responsibility of the Test Research and Development Unit at CSA to develop exams that assess which candidates are the *most* qualified for a job based on their knowledge, skills and abilities through a competitive process.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Testing Process

Here are some of the most frequently asked questions about the testing process at Career Service Authority:

1. Why do I have to take a test at Career Service Authority?

Rule 2 – Career Service Authority:

- A. Duties and Organization of the Board:
 - 1. The five-member Board shall foster and maintain a merit-based personnel system for the Career Service and shall be committed to equal employment opportunity in accordance with the City Charter and the Denver Revised Municipal Code. The Board shall carry out all other duties delegated by the Denver Revised Municipal Code or ordinance.....
- B. The Board is responsible for adopting, administering and enforcing rules necessary to foster and maintain this merit-based personnel system including, but not limited to rules providing:
 - 1. For the conduct of competitive examinations of competence (Rule 3 SELECTION).....

2. What is a Merit System?

Rule 3 – Selection; Purpose Statement:

The Career Service Authority (“CSA”) administers a merit-based personnel system in which appointments and promotions of employees are made on the basis of merit and ability. Further, applicants and employees are entitled to equal employment opportunity without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, military status, age, disability, or political affiliation or any other status protected by federal, state or local laws. The purpose of the CSA selection process is to provide City departments and agencies with the best qualified employees, in accordance with the principles set forth in the City charter, by publicizing job opportunities, examining applicants, identifying those with the greatest merit and providing their names to the various departments and agencies for hire or promotion. (Revised effective January 22, 2010; Rules Revision Memo 44C)

In other words, there must be a competitive examination process (a pre employment test) used to determine merit and ability. This process may consist of one or many different types of tests.

3. What are the benefits of using a pre-employment test?

When developed and validated according to guidelines, tests identify which candidates are the most qualified for a position and can assist hiring managers in making hiring decisions.

4. What types of pre employment tests does Career Service Authority give?

Career Service offers several different types of test formats, depending on what type of test has been determined to best measure the requirements of the job. One or a combination of the exams below may be used:

Test Type	Description	Types of jobs
Analysis Exercise	Requires the candidate to review data from various sources, draw conclusions and present a summary of those conclusions. These exercises are developed to measure a skill or ability which closely approximates the work situation, such as a manger going through his or her in-box and having to prioritize and make decisions on the contents inside.	Professional level positions, evaluation of soft-skills (interpersonal, communication, problem solving, conflict management, etc.) important.
Assessment Interview	An in-person panel interview with the candidate comprised of experts in the job. The candidate's responses are compared to appropriate job-related responses. All interviews at Career Service Authority are <i>structured</i> interviews, meaning that all candidates are asked the same questions and rated on the same criteria.	Used for positions that require effective oral communication; evaluation of soft-skills (interpersonal, communication, problem solving, conflict management, etc.) are <i>critical</i> ; Ability to probe and/or follow-up with candidate is important.
Critical Incident	An extensive review of written candidate supplemental information. The candidate is asked to respond to 3-5 in-depth behaviorally focused questions. Responses are reviewed by subject matter experts and compared to job-related benchmarks. This is a type of Scored Supplemental and typically more thorough and in depth than a Scored Supplemental.	Upper level and/or management position, evaluation of soft-skills (interpersonal, communication, problem solving, conflict management, etc.) important; Position requires effective written communication.
Performance Test	A skills-based test that requires the candidate to demonstrate skill. Similar to Skills Test, but typically hands-on and assessing a physical skill. Includes operating equipment, driving, performing tasks, etc.	Proficiency <i>critical</i> at time of entry; high degree of specialized knowledge such as equipment operation.

Scored Supplemental	A review of the candidate's application, resume and/or supplemental information. Candidate is asked to complete a series of job related questions typically found at the end of the application. The candidate's training and experience is compared to benchmarks in job-related knowledge, skill or ability (KSA) and/or competency areas.	Mid-to-upper level and/or professional position, requiring specific experience and/or education; evaluation of soft-skills (interpersonal, communication, problem solving, conflict management, etc.) important; positions that require effective written communication.
Skills Test	Requires the candidate to demonstrate a skill. Typically a computer-based software program or basic skill such as operating software in a computer.	Positions that require skills such as Windows XP, Outlook, Word, Access, Excel, typing, etc. or Basic Skills (reading, math, etc.)
Video Test	Used for jobs that require a specific knowledge component that does not require a high level of reading ability or which require a significant amount of customer contact to allow for skills assessments based on job specific scenarios.	Entry level labor and trades positions such as Utility Workers and Senior Utility Workers.
Writing Exercise	Candidate is asked to complete a writing sample that will provide information on their writing skills, organization, content development, and grammatical skills.	Used for jobs that require strong skills and abilities in document preparation and/or report writing.
Written Test	A knowledge-based test that is typically multiple-choice. Used for jobs requiring a specific knowledge component which can be best measured by a broad sampling of the subject matter areas.	Entry level; Basic Skills (reading, math, etc.); High degree of specialized knowledge; large volume openings

5. When I am applying for a position, I see questions at the end of the application; does this mean I am taking a test?

Most likely, yes. Career Service Authority may use these supplemental questions (referred to as Scored Supplementals on the previous page) to rate your training and experience and score your responses compared to other candidates that have applied for that position. These types of questions will usually ask you about your experience with the various requirements of the position. In many instances, these questions are the only testing that is done, so candidates should be as thorough as possible when responding.

6. Where are Career Service exams located?

When you are invited to participate in a written, video, writing exercise or skills testing exam, it will usually be located at the

**Wellington E. Webb Municipal Office Building
201 W. Colfax Ave.
1st Floor CSA Reception Desk
Denver, CO 80202**

Your test notice will notify you of the location, date and time of the exam. Other exams such as Assessment Interviews or performance tests may be located at another location. Scored Supplemental exams and Critical Incidents are usually done online at the time of completing the application.

Webb Building Parking and Information

There are public parking lots on 14th and Court as well as additional parking in lots in the surrounding blocks around the building. Please allow yourself plenty of time to find a parking space and get into the building. In order to gain access into the building, you will be required to go through building security.

7. How can I best prepare to take a Career Service Authority test?

- Get as much information as you can about the job you will be testing for. Read the job announcement carefully and make an honest assessment of your skills. Think through each of the qualifications required for the job and how you measure up. Ask yourself if you are really qualified for the job. Be critical of your skills. Remember, meeting the minimum qualifications is only the *first* hurdle of the process.

- Get a copy of the job specification for the position you have applied for at:
 - <http://www.denvergov.org/SearchJobs/JobSpecificationsandPayRanges/tabid/433127/Default.aspx>.

The primary job duties and responsibilities and job competencies are outlined in the class specification. This will help you identify possible content areas for the test.

- Get a good night's sleep the night before the test so you can approach it well rested. This reduces the risk that you will be stressed on test day.
- Don't go to the test room on an empty stomach. This allows full concentration on the test and not on your hunger.
- Be on time. Reduce anxiety by not having to rush around at the last minute. Career Service tests start promptly at their scheduled time. If you are late, you *will not* be admitted to the test and may not be re-scheduled. Allow time for traffic, parking and finding the test room.
- Cramming doesn't work. If you intend to study possible content areas, do so well before the night before the test.
- For a written test, as the tests are being distributed, calm yourself by closing your eyes and breathing deeply.
- Before the test, read through the test questions and instructions briefly. This will allow you to get a rough idea on how to budget your time and allow you to get a sense of which questions will require the most thought and which you may be able to answer first.
- Use your time wisely. Do not rush through the test and leave early just to reduce your anxiety. If you go blank, skip a question and move on, but remember to answer all questions; even if you must guess.

8. I've been notified that I need to take a test that I have already taken previously. Can I transfer my score?

If a test has been taken previously, the candidate may request that their appropriate score(s) be transferred to the open position that they have applied for. Candidates are able to transfer scores indefinitely, unless 1) a new test has been developed for the position, or 2) you would like to re test to improve your previous score. (Please remember, the latest test score is the one that you will have in your file). Once you receive a notice to test, if you have questions on

transferring scores, email or contact the recruiter (by replying to the email test notice) if you have a score on file you would like to transfer.

9. When will I receive my test score notice?

You will be notified of your score in approximately two weeks, either by regular mail or email.

10. How long will my score stay on file?

Passing scores will stay on file for an indeterminate period of time unless 1) a new test has been developed for the position, or 2) you would like to re test to improve your previous score. (Please remember, the latest test score is the one that you will have in your file).

11. I've been notified that I passed the exam. When will I be interviewed?

Names of candidates who pass a Career Service test are placed on an eligible list for that job. If your name is reached for certification (the top 20 names for each opening based on test score; the certification list) the hiring agency (where the job is) may contact you directly to come for a hiring interview, depending on your qualifications for the job and your experience. Eligible lists last for 3 months and may be extended at the request of the agency.

12. Is there a process to review my test score?

Career Service Authority encourages candidates to prepare to test prior to their test date and have provided you with some resources in this manual to assist you in doing that. However, we no longer review test scores with candidates after the test has been administered.

13. I have been notified that I failed the test, can I retake it?

If you failed the test, you may retake it only if the position is opened again as a new recruitment.

14. I received a notice that I failed the test but did not get a score. Is it possible to know how I did?

Career Service Authority does not send test scores that are below the required passing point. Your notice will just inform you that you were below the required passing point.

15. Can I take a test for another position?

Yes, as long as you apply for the position, there is nothing that precludes you from taking other exams at Career Service Authority.

16. I received a schedule notice for a test and I am unable to make the date. Can I reschedule to take the exam on a different day?

Unless another scheduled date and time is available for the job, all tests must be taken when scheduled. Deferred tests are permissible only for candidates who miss a scheduled test for the following reasons: the applicant or employee was ordered into military service, the applicant or employee has jury duty, the applicant or employee has been subpoenaed to appear in court, the employee has been ordered to perform City business, the employee has a work-related injury or, good cause has been shown and approved by the personnel director. If you have any questions, contact the recruiter when you receive your test notice.

17. What if I require special accommodations in the testing process?

If you are a qualified candidate with a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act and require special accommodations in the testing process, you will be directed to request an accommodation *once you receive your notice to test*. Accommodations are made on a case-by-case basis and all information discussed is confidential.

18. What test taking resources are out there to help me prepare to take a test?

There are numerous resources that you can use as you begin your test preparation process. The internet provides access to numerous test study guides and free practice tests that may help you prepare. On the following sites you'll find a lot of resources and information about the test preparation process as well as practice tests for specific content areas. Most of your initial studying can come from free online test prep resources. This is in no way an exhaustive list of the

available resources, just a broad sample of the information you may find out there.

For Current City and County of Denver Employees:

Career Counseling/Development

<http://www.denvergov.org/CareerDevelopment/tabid/432089/Default.aspx>

Training Catalog

<http://www.denvergov.org/CareerDevelopment/Training/TrainingCalendar/tabid/432453/Default.aspx>

For All Candidates:

Workforce Development Centers

<http://www.milehigh.com/employment>

Other Resources:

Conduct internet searches for “How to Study” resources, as well as specific study tutorials, e.g., mathematics.

Emily Griffith Opportunity School Community College of Denver Adult Education programs

Denver Public Library

Civil Service Grammar and Usage. Publisher; Syosset, NY: Learning Corporation. 428.2076 C4995 *Pre GED Language Arts, Writing*. (Video) Publisher; Roslyn Heights, NY: Video Aided Instruction. 373.1 P DVD *McGraw-Hill's Top 50 Math Skills for GED Success*. Mitchell, Robert. Publisher; New York: McGraw-Hill 510.76 Mitchell *Pre GED Mathematics*. (Video) Publisher; Roselynn Heights, NY: Video Aided Instruction 373.1 P DVD

19. I get really anxious before I have to take a test. Is there anything that I can do?

Preparing for a test isn't easy, and most test takers experience some sort of test anxiety. Test anxiety refers to the emotional responses to tension or stress resulting from nervousness for upcoming exams. The most common symptom is a mental block or “freeze up”. A person with test anxiety may find the words meaningless while reading test questions or have a need to re-read test questions several times before understanding them. Other symptoms that are common are panic, difficulty concentrating, physical discomfort or forgetting

information at the time of the test. Remember that it is normal to be a little anxious. Approach the test with confidence and remember that no one is expected to know all of the answers.

Here are some strategies that have been found to be effective in reducing test anxiety:

- Being well prepared for the test is the best way to reduce test taking anxiety. Assess your skills and the position that you are testing for.
- Space out your studying over a few days or weeks, and continually review any, don't wait until the night before and try to learn everything then.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude while preparing for the test and during the test. Think positively about the test and your abilities.
- Exercising for a few days before the test will help reduce stress.
- Get a good night's sleep before the test.
- Show up to the test early so you won't have to worry about being late.
- Stay relaxed, if you begin to get nervous take a few deep breaths slowly to relax yourself and then get back to work.
- Listen or read the directions slowly and carefully.
- If you don't understand the directions, ask the proctor to explain them to you.
- Skim through the test so that you have a good idea how to pace yourself.
- Do the simple questions first to help build up your confidence for the harder questions.
- Don't worry about how fast other people finish their test; just concentrate on your own test.
- If you don't know a question skip it for the time being (come back to it later if you have time), and remember that you don't have to always get every question right to do well on the test.
- Focus on the question at hand; don't let your mind wander on other things.

Good luck with your career pursuits with the City and County of Denver!