

Working with Paraprofessionals

Field User Guide



Roles and Responsibilities

The classroom teacher is always the primary teacher for all students. The paraprofessional's responsibilities should align to the classroom schedule and include guidance from the teacher on what to do during particular parts of a lesson. Paraprofessionals should spend the majority of their time on instructional activities designed by the classroom teacher, not on administrative duties.

Communication

Clear communication among the educators working together is key to a successful teaching team. Student expectations must remain consistent from person to person. In addition to communicating the expected roles and responsibilities of the teaching team, it is also helpful to define the specific responsibilities related to communication with others outside the teaching team.



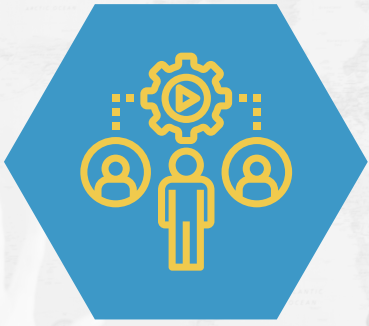
Documentation

Both federal Title 1 Regulations ([34 CFR §200.59\(c\)\(1\)](#)) and state rules ([19 TAC §230.61](#)) require that paraprofessionals be directly supervised by a certified teacher. Supervision should be conducted by a certified special educator when the paraprofessional is responsible for individualized education program (IEP) implementation. The local education agency (LEA) determines documentation practices related to supervision.

Virtual Setting

In a virtual setting, paraprofessionals can continue to assist in providing supports for students. Teachers determine how the talents and skills of paraprofessionals can best be utilized to support student needs in a virtual setting.





Roles and Responsibilities

All duties assigned to a paraprofessional should fall within their scope of certification and they should always be supervised by a certified teacher.

Assist individual students and groups of students as directed by the teacher.*

Provide support for students outside of the general education classroom only when designated per a student's IEP.*

Assist in grading assignments or tests that have clear answers (e.g., multiple choice).*

Assist in the implementation of the behavior intervention plan (BIP).*

Implement supports, directed by the teacher, during the direct teach portion of the lesson.*

Assist in the collection of data on the student's mastery of behavior and academic goals and objectives using criteria developed by the special educator. *

Assist in clerical recording of grades.*

Assist in collecting and recording attendance information. *

Provide supports to individual students, as appropriate, and document per the student's IEP as directed by the teacher.

Provide any information requested by the teacher or administrator for the development of the IEP.

Assist the teacher in the implementation of the classroom management system.

Supervise hallways, play areas, etc., as directed by administration.

Assist with other clerical duties in the classroom (e.g., organization of materials, making copies, etc.), as directed by the teacher.

Paraprofessionals may **not**:

- develop lesson plans
- introduce new content
- provide the direct teach portion of the lesson
- select materials for the implementation of the lesson
- assign final grades
- develop IEP goals and objectives
- design the classroom management system
- be responsible for determining or reporting student progress for either general education or special education goals

*Indicates duties requiring a specific level of certification.

[19 TAC §230.61](#)

Communication



It is important that paraprofessionals have both general information about their duties and specific information about the students they will be working with. Paraprofessionals must understand all aspects of confidentiality. Teachers should share the following information with paraprofessionals.

Report

- Convey that the paraprofessional is part of the educational team and should expect to receive the same respect as the teacher.
- Describe how the paraprofessional is an important part of the learning community and is there to help ensure student success.
- Identify where materials or supplies are located that may be needed for instructional purposes.

Grades

- Explain that the teacher has the ultimate responsibility for communicating progress, concerns, and specific results of students' academic and behavioral status to others.
- Explain that the paraprofessional should redirect a parent to contact the teacher for student information.
- Explain the legal obligations of the IEP as they relate to the paraprofessional's role with a student.

Classroom Management

- Clarify how the paraprofessional will assist with general classroom management.
- Explain that both the paraprofessional and teacher will share the same expectations of the students, and give the same positive and negative consequences.

Academic Assistance

- Explain that the paraprofessional is to provide enough support so students are challenged but still feel successful. The paraprofessional should gradually fade assistance when appropriate.
- Explain that the paraprofessional (if funded through IDEA B or state special education allotment) is there to support students receiving special education services. However, the paraprofessional may include students without disabilities in the services provided for students with disabilities (e.g., inclusive classrooms where both students in special education and general education are present).



Documentation

The teacher is responsible for day-to-day supervision of the paraprofessional. The list below includes ways of encouraging and documenting communication between the supervising teacher and the paraprofessional.

Create a system of communication that ensures student information remains confidential, such as email, phone calls, messages, notes, and meetings before or after the school day.

Schedule enough planning and communication time to ensure everyone is prepared to support students on a daily basis.

Monitor and provide feedback on the working relationship.

Establish a “chain of command” so the supervising teacher and the paraprofessional know whom to contact when problems arise.

Document all communication that involves a student’s characteristics, needs, and educational goals, including team meetings, discussions, decisions, and daily check-ins.

Provide the paraprofessional a schedule that outlines duties each day, week, grading period, or semester, including grade level and content area meetings and planning time.

Document constructive and corrective feedback on instructional and non-instructional activities.

Virtual Settings



It is important to remember that all laws associated with the allowable responsibilities for paraprofessionals remain the same whether in a virtual setting or a face-to-face classroom.

Paraprofessionals can:

Supplemental Instruction and Supports

- review content in a breakout room
- record observational data
- research resources (videos, photos, text, etc.)
- convert materials to an online format
- create video instructions for an activity using teacher created scripts
- host office hours to help students with assignments
- host online story hours, interactive activities, and games
- record a science demonstration to review previously-taught content
- host an online art activity
- lead brain break activities
- check in with students and families
- research virtual manipulatives necessary to comply with a student's IEP
- compile a list of free online resources and games for a lesson
- record the steps in a daily life skill

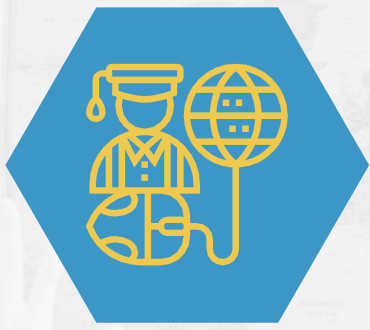
As a Co-Host

- manage breakout rooms
- provide annotation as students share their ideas
- organize documents, presentations, links, etc.
- facilitate the chat box
- support students with muting and unmuting during lessons
- schedule virtual meetings, conferences, and small groups for the teacher
- provide supplemental aides, accommodations, or scaffolding using private chats and break out rooms

Teachers can:

Tips

- create resources for the paraprofessional such as student expectations, discipline practices, access for electronic resources, passwords to school instructional platforms, etc.
- include the paraprofessional on emails, parent communication, school wide scheduling, announcements, etc.
- hold weekly meetings to review lessons, responsibilities, student concerns, parent contacts, etc.
- share professional development opportunities



Resources

Bertoia, Adrianna. 2020. "Working with a Paraprofessional during Remote Learning." Accessed December 2, 2020.

https://medium.com/@adrianna_91090/working-with-a-paraprofessional-during-remote-learning-f0de4908e487

Giangreco, Michael. 2020. "Remote Use of Paraprofessional Supports for Students with Disabilities During COVID-19 Pandemic." The University of Vermont Center on disability and Community Inclusion.

<https://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/information-about-covid-19-coronavirus/paraprofessional-planning-covid19/>

Howie, Amy. "Utilizing Paraprofessionals to Support Virtual Learning." *EDPlan Blog*. *EDPlan*, April 10, 2020.

<https://www.edplan.com/blog/post/utilizing-paraprofessionals-to-support-virtual-learning>

TEA (Texas Education Agency). 2020. Working with Paraprofessionals A Resource for Educators of Students with Disabilities.

<https://www.inclusionintexas.org/upload/page/0322/docs/WorkingWithParaprofessionals-01.pdf>

Professional Development

["Paraeducator: What we do Matters"](#) module videos were created by Washington Professional Educator Standards Board. This series of 58 short videos, ranging from less than one minute to three minutes. includes topics such as paraeducator roles, confidentiality, student developmental stages, scaffolding, providing feedback, accommodations, managing conflict, equitable learning strategies, culture, inclusive classrooms, technology, collecting data, and communication.