Paraprofessional Services Resource

Overview

The Paraprofessional Services Resource is intended to provide support to the field regarding paraprofessional roles to Iowa educational practitioners (administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.) who provide services to PK-12 students with paraprofessional support in their IEP. The information outlines appropriate services for paraprofessionals in classrooms in which they are the only assistant to a teacher, in classrooms in which they are among multiple assistants to a teacher, in behavior settings, in community-based settings, or in assignments in which they travel among classrooms to assist a student or groups of students who are eligible for special education. This document does not include information for paraprofessionals in support and related services such as Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTA), Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPA), Physical Therapy Assistants (PTA), and other such roles. This document does not apply to general education or preschool paraprofessionals who are assigned to the preschool classroom in service to the classroom environment including duties related to preschool program daily operation.

- All paraprofessionals need to be provided training that results in the skills necessary to carry out their primary assignment. For example, as the chart below indicates, paraprofessionals can implement student behavior plans IF they are appropriately trained to do so. If not, it is inappropriate to give paraprofessionals that duty.
- Key supports that are needed from administrators and teachers in order to ensure that paraprofessionals are providing appropriate services are outlined in the chart below.

Administrator and Teacher Supports to Ensure Appropriate Paraprofessional Services

Administrators

- Ensuring training and support for teachers who supervise paraprofessionals
- Ensuring paraprofessionals are provided training and support designed specifically for their assignments as well as any state required professional learning
- Establishing schedules that are designed to ensure appropriate supervision for paraprofessionals
- Being knowledgeable about paraprofessional roles and duties
- Communicating clear information to parents regarding roles and duties of paraprofessionals
- Ensure there is a feedback loop for supporting paraprofessionals in an ongoing manner.

Teachers

- Providing clear directions, appropriate training, and appropriate supports for paraprofessional duties.
- For example, teachers help paraprofessionals understand and implement strategies in the BIP, how to collect data, or implementing accommodations.
- Providing appropriate supervision for paraprofessionals
- Communicating regularly with paraprofessionals regarding teacher and paraprofessional roles.
- Communicating clear information to parents regarding roles and duties of paraprofessionals

Instruction

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Reinforcing application of skills on previously introduced concepts.** Paraprofessionals should be trained in how to follow but not go beyond teacher directions in practice and drilling sessions.
- **Generalizing accommodations in response to immediate needs.** Paraprofessionals can build on skills that have been introduced to students. For example, if a student has been introduced to and taught the use of a particular strategy, that strategy can be generalized to other subject areas or social settings with the assistance of the paraprofessional.
- **Facilitating teacher instructions in small group activities**
- **Constructing instructional materials.** Paraprofessionals can construct games for review or other review materials under the supervision of a teacher.
- **Assisting the teacher in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner.**
- **Supervising students in work settings.** Paraprofessionals can oversee implementation of a licensed professional's (work experience coordinator, etc.) program for students in community or work settings, including providing feedback to students as directed by the licensed professional. They can also collect and record assessment data in those settings as directed by the licensed professional and share that information with the licensed professional who assesses and plans for continuing needs.

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Introducing new skills and concepts that go beyond teacher directions**
- **Setting goals for students and/or classes**
- **Selecting, designing or modifying the content of the instructional materials**
- **Varying any component of a scripted program or making assessments and/or instructional decisions regarding student responses in a scripted program**
- **Designing student outcomes and expectations in work settings.** Working with employers or other work site supervisors to design student learning outcomes, student expectations and other developmental components of the student's work setting program.
- Paraprofessionals should not take the place of a teacher who is out of the classroom for daily or regularly scheduled periods or **be viewed as a substitute.** *

  **A paraeducator who holds a substitute authorization is allowed to substitute during a teacher's absence only in the special education classroom in which the paraeducator is employed [282—14.143(272)].*
  IMPORTANT NOTE: The substitute authorization is not intended to replace daily or regularly planned instruction

Assessment

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Collecting data.** Based on direction from the teacher, a paraprofessional can observe and document student social, behavioral or academic performance (if appropriately trained). The data are shared with the teacher who makes decisions on instructional needs.
- **Recording and charting data**
- **"Checking" papers.** Paraprofessionals can check student work for which an answer key has been provided.
- **Reading tests to students.** Paraprofessionals need to be trained in appropriate test reading procedures. Districts should consider technology such as text readers or other alternatives to provide support to students who need reading accommodations during a test.

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Developing assessment materials**
- **Modifying the content of instructional materials**
- **Completing error analysis**
- **Administer standardized, diagnostic assessments such as the Basic Reading Inventory**

Student Behavior

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Implementing student behavior plans.** Paraprofessionals need to be trained in how to follow and not go beyond teacher directions when implementing behavior plans.
- **Implementing building-wide or classroom behavioral expectations such as PBIS (if appropriately trained).**
- **Supervising students during recess, bus duty, transportation, lunch duty, study hall and other unstructured periods of the day.** Paraprofessionals can also supervise hallways and accompany students going to classrooms or other sites in the school building (gymnasium, library, etc…)

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Developing and evaluating student behavior goals and plans**
- **Developing and evaluating building-wide and classroom behavioral expectations.**

Family and Parent Interactions

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Interactions with family members.** Paraprofessionals may provide information regarding daily routines and upcoming events. If questions related to progress, instruction or specific student needs arise, the paraprofessional should direct the family to the teacher.
- **Input into the Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning.** Paraprofessionals may be a source of information at the IEP team meeting regarding student response to instruction and behavior programs by sharing information gathered through observations of the student (if the paraprofessional has been trained in the appropriate observation procedures).

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- **Interactions with family members.** Paraprofessionals should not discuss student progress, needs or other educational program components with family members outside of IEP meetings.

Organizational Duties

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- Maintaining an inventory and ordering supplies as directed by the teacher
- Maintaining an orderly, healthy and safe environment.
- Setting up and maintaining learning environments, learning centers and adaptive equipment as directed by the teacher.
- Recording activities for documentation (implementation log).
- Copying and disseminating instructional/assessment materials
- Adjusting the size, spacing, color, etc… of instructional materials as directed by the teacher.

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- Developing an inventory and making fiscal and organizational decisions on needed supplies.
- Developing plans and routines for orderly, healthy and safe environments.
- Designing learning environments, learning centers and adaptive equipment.

Health Services

Appropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- Under the direction and monitoring of a health professional or health plan supervisor, a paraprofessional with appropriate training may assist with the implementation of a health plan.

Inappropriate Paraprofessional Duties

- Assist with implementation of a health plan without appropriate training
- Develop or modify a health plan