



Guiding educational opportunities for learners as unique as their fingerprints

Clear Creek School District RE1, Gilpin County School District RE1, Platte Canyon School District 1



Special Education Paraprofessional Handbook

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WELCOME TO MT. EVANS BOCES

Welcome to our school district and to your new school, classroom, and team. We hope that your employment here will be filled with positive growth and learning for you, as well as for the students and teachers with whom you will work with every day.

You have been hired to assist students with special education needs meet their educational goals. As you begin to settle into your new job, we are providing you with this handbook as one way to share some general information intended to support you in your day-to-day work with students and staff. Please familiarize yourself with the information on the following pages. Complete the signature page at the end of the handbook and return it to your supervisor. After reading this handbook, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about your role as a paraprofessional, please contact your immediate supervisor or the principal of your building.

We are confident that our school community will benefit in many ways from your contributions to the students and staff. We will provide you with ongoing direction and support to help you be the best that you can be and also further develop your many talents and skills. Again, welcome to our school community!

Sincerely,

Terri Jones, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Mt. Evans BOCES

ROLE OF A PARAPROFESSIONAL

► How do paraprofessionals contribute to the school community?

Did you know that paraprofessionals comprise one of the fastest growing positions in public education? Employment projections indicate that the need for skilled paraprofessionals to assist with many instructional and non-instructional tasks in public schools will continue to increase dramatically over the next 10-20 years. As the number of skilled paraprofessionals increase, their roles and responsibilities continue to change and evolve, becoming both more specialized and comprehensive. One reason for the increase is that children in classrooms are much more diverse than even 10 years ago. A specific area of increased diversity has resulted from students with disabilities receiving their educational services in general education classrooms. Frequently, paraprofessionals are hired to provide assistance to students with and without disabilities, and to general and special education teachers.

► Who are paraprofessionals?

As you may already know, a variety of job titles are used throughout the country to refer to personnel who function in the role of a "paraprofessional." Our District uses the title paraprofessional. Titles in other districts include: paraeducator, instructional assistant, teacher's assistant, individualized learning assistant, pupil support assistant and many more. In this handbook we are using the term "paraprofessional" to refer to school employees;

Whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers other direct or indirect services to students and/or parents; and who work under the supervision of a teacher or other professional staff member who is responsible for the overall conduct of the class, the design and implementation of individualized educational programs, and the assessment of the effect of the programs on the student progress (Pickett, 1988. p. 2)

The focus of this handbook is for paraprofessionals who work primarily with students with special needs and who may be included in one or more educational teams with certified professionals.

► Providing Curriculum & Instructional Support

The licensed general and special educators have primary responsibility for the design and development of daily instruction for all of the students in the class, including students with disabilities and other unique learning needs. As a paraprofessional, you will have many responsibilities related to supporting the implementation of instruction, as well as classroom management. You might be asked to provide very specific types of support to individual students with disabilities; for example, implementing specific instructional procedures developed by the special educator, or assisting with the physical management and positioning of students as specified by the occupational or physical therapists. You might also be asked to assist individual or small groups of students to review or practice skills under the direction of licensed personnel. Licensed personnel include classroom teachers, speech-language pathologists, special educators, adaptive physical education teachers, occupational and physical therapists and other specialists.

Although, your primary role and initial focus is to assist individual student(s), you may also be asked to assist with classroom management so that the certified educator can more effectively deliver instruction to small or large groups of students. Other examples of paraprofessional roles are: monitoring students during a test, assisting students understanding of classroom expectations, organizing lunch count and distributing papers. In addition, general or special educators and others may ask that you perform specific tasks.

The following table delineates the roles and responsibilities for teachers and paraprofessional staff:

Area	Teacher/Case Manager/Related Service Provider	Paraprofessional
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans weekly schedule Plans lessons/activities Sets and/or maintains/monitors documentation system Communicates all decisions/plans Communicates needs of the student's safety and welfare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Implements</i> plan following training & demonstrated competency
Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assesses the student Administers the assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assists in scoring and data collection
Individual Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops & implements the individual plan Communicates with all team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Carries out individual student(s) plan</i> under the direction of teacher, IEP manager or related service provider
Goals & Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determines appropriate goals & objectives with the IEP team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implements lessons/strategies to meet objectives and assists in collecting data
Instruction & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives instructions for entire group, small groups, & individual student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Works with small groups & individual students to reinforce teacher/service provider instructions and training
Behavioral Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans behavior management strategies for groups & individuals Describes/prescribes appropriate risks & limitations for each student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Implements</i> behavioral strategies using the same emphasis and techniques as the teacher/case manager or related service provider
Working with Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets parents Communicates with parents Responsible for IEP development, progress reporting & overall communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Communicates information to supervisor, who communicates the information to parents ✓ May be requested to attend IEP meetings

Area	Teacher/Case Manager/Related Service Provider	Paraprofessional
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design systems for data collection based on IEP Goals and Objectives or other educational purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Collect and record data in accordance with teacher's instructions

THE FIRST WEEK ON THE JOB

Starting a new job can be confusing. This worksheet can help ensure you have information you need when starting your job.

☐ Following your orientation you should receive the following information for the building you work in:

_____ Student handbook, including discipline policies

_____ Staff handbook (if available), to include dress code and code of conduct

_____ Your personal school email address

_____ Building crisis plan (if available) outlining responsibilities and procedures for physical injury, death and suicide, lock-down, etc.

_____ School calendar

_____ List of staff names and contact information

_____ Procedures for notification of school cancellation

If you do not receive this information, contact your building principal.

☐ Questions to ask your supervising teacher:

You may wish to write your responses down for future reference.

What hours/days do I work? (Fill in start and end time below.)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

- ▶ When is my lunchtime and where am I allowed to eat? Do I have any other breaks?
- ▶ Where am I allowed to park my car?
- ▶ Where can I put personal items, such as my coat, purse, lunch, etc.?
- ▶ If I am ill or am going to be absent, what is the procedure for calling in?
- ▶ What is the procedure for signing/clocking in and out each day?

CODE OF ETHICS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

A code of ethics defines and describes acceptable practices. A code for paraprofessionals examines specific responsibilities of the paraprofessional, as well as the relationships that must be maintained with students, parents, teachers, school, and community.

Accepting Responsibilities

- Recognize that the supervising teacher has the ultimate responsibility for student's instruction and management.
- Engage only in activities which have been previously **identified and approved** by your supervisor.
- Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents unless directed to do so by the supervising teacher.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to the supervising teacher.

Relationships with Students and Parents

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations, and/or educational program **only** with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting (at school and in the context of a meeting, not in the hallway).
- Discuss school problems and confidential matters **only** with appropriate personnel and only at school.
- Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a student's disability, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members.
- Present yourself as a positive adult role model at all times.

Relationship with the Your Supervising Teacher

- Recognize the teacher as a supervisor and team leader. Show respect for his/her authority.
- Establish open communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Discuss concern directly with the teacher.
- When problems cannot be resolved directly with your supervisor, ask to consult with your building principal and the Director of Special Education.

Relationship with the School

- Accept responsibility for making improvements as directed by your supervisor.
- Know school policies and procedures. Know the plan for each of your students and your responsibilities in carrying out the plan.
- Represent the school district in a positive manner at all times, even in the community.
- Be a team player and a source of helpfulness, not of conflict within the school.

PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following are expected behaviors:

- Be on time! Promptness is essential - students may not be safe while you are "running late".
- Regular attendance is very important. Students, teachers and other paraprofessionals depend on you each day.
- Follow building procedures for absences.
- Maintain focus on your duties at all times. Your job is to support students. Conducting personal business (personal phone calls, reading newspapers, e-mails, or other recreational reading material, etc.) is not acceptable while on duty.
- As a paraprofessional, you are always expected to present a professional appearance and to conduct yourself in a professional manner.
 - ✓ Maintain good personal hygiene. You will be in close proximity with many people.
 - ✓ Alter your dress if it causes a distraction or challenging behaviors for the student(s). (i.e., dangling earring that distract the student.)

Also, very important:

- Take concerns directly to the person involved or your immediate supervisor. Avoid "venting" your concerns with co-workers or students in the hallways or lounge.
- Avoid talking about students, other personnel, or other personal matters in front of students.
- Maintain and exhibit respect for families.

COMMUNICATION & ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Teachers are required to follow certain ethical standards of professional behavior. Paraprofessionals too, need guidelines for appropriate conduct in their work with teachers and students. The following points about confidentiality, communication, and mandatory reporting provide an overview of considerations to guide you in work-related communications.

■ Establishing Effective Communication

As you can imagine, there are many things that need to be communicated with educational team members. Minimally, you will need to communicate about issues related to individual student programs, curriculum planning and adaptations, roles and responsibilities, behavioral and/or health considerations, and scheduling. Communication is the foundation of effective teamwork and occurs both in person and in writing. As you begin your role as a paraprofessional, it may be helpful for you to ask both the special and general educators that you work with how you will fit into the communication loop. Of particular importance will be how to communicate on a regular basis about individual student programming needs. Your team should have a regularly scheduled time to meet each week.

Even with proactive systems of communication in place, you may encounter situations with students that require you to think and act quickly. When these situations arise, make your best decision based on your knowledge of the student and the situation as it presents itself. Frequently, these spontaneous decisions are made related to difficulties with changes in schedules, activities, or student groups. It may be helpful to document these incidents in order to keep the entire educational team informed of the student's instructional and behavioral progress.

■ Communicating with Parents & Families

Another situation in which you may need to communicate with your supervising teachers is with regard to contact, either written or verbal with family members. Given your close proximity to students, you may sometimes come in direct contact with parents or other family members. Ongoing communication with parents is the responsibility of the IEP manager and classroom teacher. However, there may be situations in which you are the person to whom parents initially communicate a need or question. Be sure to inform the teachers about the information discussed.

■ Respectful Interactions Towards Students

You may develop a close relationship with the student(s) you support on a daily basis. Thus, it is important that you consider what interactions are the most respectful to the student(s) and those around him or her. Your body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, choice of words, and age-appropriate language all need to be considered when communicating with the student(s).

MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is an important aspect of your job as a paraprofessional. Through your work you will learn information about students and families. Such information is personal and private. It **must not** be shared beyond the school team. It is ***disrespectful*** and is ***illegal*** to do so.

Beyond students with disabilities, the privacy right of all students and families who are associated with your school must be regarded. Following are suggested guidelines for maintaining confidentiality:

1. Never discuss information about a student in a public place (e.g., faculty lounge, hallway, grocery store).
2. Never discuss information about one student with the parents of another student.
3. Never discuss information about one student with another student.
4. Never discuss information about a student with school personnel who are not considered a member of that student's service providing team.
5. If you need to access a student's records or other personal information, go through the proper channels as developed by your school.
6. Do not maintain your own personal files on a student or family.
7. Review the confidentiality policies of your specific school with your immediate supervisor. If you have questions regarding the policies and procedures of your school regarding confidentiality, speak to your supervisor immediately.

Here are some examples on how you might respond to questions that people ask you about your job.

Possible Question	Possible Response
"Who's that funny looking kid that flaps his hands all the time?"	"Student information is confidential to everyone but his parents and teachers."
"I heard you're working at the school... Is that third-grade teacher as mean as everyone says?"	"I'm an employee at the school now, I can't talk about my colleagues that way." Or "Employees aren't allowed to talk about one another outside of school."
"What's the scoop on Gail...I heard her husband....?"	"Gail's my fellow employee as well as my friend now; I can't discuss her private life."
"What's wrong with Suzanne?"	"Student information is protected by law. I'd be breaking the law if I spoke about any student outside of school."
"I heard Jason is doing better with that new special education teacher."	"Jason's progress is confidential. It is not okay for me to discuss it."
"Is Tanya in the special reading class?"	"Placement of students is a confidential matter. We're not allowed to speak about student placement outside of school."

IT'S THE "PERSON FIRST" - THEN THE DISABILITY

► **What do you see first?**

- The wheelchair?
- The physical problem?
- The person?

If you saw a person in a wheelchair unable to get up the stairs into a building, would you say "there is a handicapped person unable to find a ramp"? Or would you say "there is a person with a disability who is handicapped by an inaccessible building"?

What is the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability?

Consider how you would introduce someone – Jane Doe – who doesn't have a disability. You would give her name, where she lives, what she does or what she is interested in – she likes swimming, playing cards, or watching Robert Redford movies.

Why say it differently for a person with disabilities?

Every person is made up of many characteristics – mental, as well as physical – and few want to be identified only by their ability to play tennis, or by their love for fried onions, or by the mole that's on their face. Those are just parts of us.

In speaking or writing, remember that children or adults with disabilities are like everyone else – except they happen to have a disability. Therefore, here are a few tips for improving your language related to disabilities and handicaps.

1. Speak of the **person first**, then the disability.
2. Emphasize abilities, not limitations.
3. Do not label people as part of a disability group – don't say "the disabled", say "people with disabilities."
4. Don't give excessive praise or attention to a person with a disability; don't patronize them.
5. Choice and independence are important; let the person do or speak for him/herself as much as possible: if addressing an adult, say "Bill" instead of "Billy."
6. A **disability** is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability to walk, hear, talk, learn, etc.; use **handicap** to describe a situation or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself.

Say . . .	Instead of . . .
child with a disability	disabled or handicapped child
person with cerebral palsy	palsied, or C.P., or spastic
person who is deaf or hard of hearing	deaf and dumb
person with cognitive limitations	retarded
person with epilepsy or person with seizure disorder	epileptic
person who has . . .	afflicted, suffers from, victim
without speech, nonverbal	mute or dumb
developmental delay	slow
emotional disorder, or mental illness	crazy or insane
uses a wheelchair	confined to a wheelchair
with Down Syndrome	mongoloid
has a learning disability	is learning disabled
non-disabled	normal, healthy
has a physical disability	crippled
congenital disability	birth defect
condition	disease (unless it is a disease)
seizures	fit
cleft lip	hare lip
mobility impaired	lame
medically involved, or has chronic illness	sickly
paralyzed	invalid or paralytic
has hemiplegia (paralysis of one side of the body)	hemiplegic
has quadriplegia (paralysis of both arms and legs)	quadriplegic
of short stature	dwarf or midget
accessible parking	handicapped parking

GETTING TO KNOW AN INDIVIDUAL STUDENT

Throughout the school year you will learn many things about all of the students in the classroom in which you work. Given the nature of your job, there are specific student(s) with whom you will work more closely and for whom you will need more information. This section identifies ways that you can become familiar with the interests, unique characteristics, abilities and needs of the individual student(s) that you support.

What is an Individualized Education Plan?

All students receiving special education services have an individualized education plan (IEP).¹ Among other information, the IEP contains a list of the student's learning priorities for the school year. These are stated as annual goals and short-term objectives. The IEP is developed each year by the student's educational team which consists of personnel from school, the student's parents or guardians, and may include the student with a disability and his/her friends. Paraprofessionals may also be asked to assist in the development of IEPs.

When you are providing support to a student with a disability who has an IEP, it is important that you have a working knowledge of what the individual student(s) learning priorities are and how you will support the student in moving closer to achieving those learning priorities. Thus, it may be helpful for you to take some time to review the IEP with the assistance of the special educator. *(Note: Information on an IEP is **confidential** and can be communicated only with members of the student's IEP team. Do not share this information with other individuals.)*

Student's Schedule

You will need to be familiar with the student's daily schedule. While the schedule may change or be modified over time, you will need to know where the student(s) with a disability is supposed to be throughout the school day. If you have not already received a schedule, please request the schedule from the general and/or special educators on your team.

It will also be helpful if you familiarize yourself with the activities, times and schedule of the school, such as the bus and lunch schedules, and the other routines of the building. Your first few days will be smoother if you know the layout of the building and the rules for cafeteria, hallway, and playground use.

¹ These individual plans are also called Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) or Individual Service Plans (ISP).

STRATEGIES FOR INTERACTING WITH STUDENTS

The following is a list of strategies that may be helpful in your interactions with students. Some students who have an IEP will have specific objectives related to their behavior and engagement in learning tasks and with peers. Such students are likely to have a behavior intervention plan that will augment or extend some of these general guidelines.

Relationship Building

- Develop a positive rapport with student.
- Maintain a professional, but supportive role with student as opposed to a "friend" relationship or a caretaking relationship.
- Provide positive, specific and frequent feedback.
- Maintain your voice at a non-threatening moderate level.
- Use respectful language with all students.

Behavioral Support

- Provide **clear expectations** of behavior and check for understanding of those expectations.
- Provide fair and **consistent consequences** for inappropriate behavior.
- Cue student to return to a task without drawing negative attention to him/her.
- Praise** the student when he/she displays appropriate behavior or finishes a task.
- Consistently follow individual behavior intervention plans that were developed by the student's team of professionals.
- Continually evaluate the stress and frustration level of student. Communicate your observations and perspectives with the general and/or special educator.

Moving Towards Independence

- Avoid becoming overprotective. Students may initially require intensive support, but you should **decrease** your level of support over time to promote independence within the student.
- Encourage interdependence among the student(s) and his/her classmates. Students will interact more naturally when you are not sitting or standing next to them.
- Recognize the importance of peer modeling of appropriate behavior and point out examples of effective behavior and its consequences. Natural supports enhance student's independence and social acceptance.
- Assist students by providing resources, **NOT giving answers**. Also, encourage the student to ***try it themselves first*** - don't rush in to do it for them. Allow students to make as

many decisions for themselves as possible. ***Your goal with students is to have them rely on you less and less and still be successful.***

MANDATORY REPORTING

All public school employees have a responsibility to be mandatory reporters. If you have a concern about potential abuse or neglect toward a student, bring this concern to your supervising teacher or principal immediately.

STUDENT LEARNING PRIORITIES AND SUPPORT

Directions: In the appropriate box, list the student's learning priorities that need to be addressed daily, regardless of location (e.g., greeting peers, using a communication device). In the remaining boxes, list the learning priorities that are specific to individual activities or classes. Then list the necessary materials, supports, and adaptations that are required for the student to accomplish his/her learning priorities. Refer to the next page for an example.

Student:		Date:
Daily Learning Priorities:	Materials	Support/Adaptations
Learning Priorities For:	Materials	Support/Adaptations
Learning Priorities For:	Materials	Support/Adaptations
Learning Priorities For:	Materials	Support/Adaptations

Source: Lowell-York, J., Doyle, MB., & Kronberg, R. (1995). Creating Inclusive Communities: Module 3b: Curriculum as everything students learn in school" Individualizing learning outcomes. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.

STUDENT LEARNING PRIORITIES AND SUPPORT

(SAMPLE)

Student: SARAH		Date: SEPT-OCT
Daily Learning Priorities: All Classes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participate during each class ▶ Bring necessary materials ▶ Move to and from classes with peers 	Same as peers	General educator Peer reminder Peers Schedule (including material listing)
Learning Priorities For: Reading		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Listen to stories with whole class ▶ Choose a book from the library and check it out ▶ Use a switch to activate taped story 	Same as peers Same as peers Big Red switch, tape recorder, tape cassette	None Peers, librarian Peers, adult
Learning Priorities For: Science		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participate in experiments ▶ Learn 2 new concepts per unit 	Same as peers Depends on the unit	To be determined To be determined
Learning Priorities For: Math		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use a calculator to check work ▶ Work with peers to solve problem ▶ Time keeper in cooperative groups ▶ Use next dollar approach to pay for lunch 	Large key calculator Same as peers Timer Number line & money (next dollar approach)	Peers, adult Peers Peers Adult

Source: Lowell-York, J., Doyle, MB., & Kronberg, R. (1995). Creating Inclusive Communities: Module 3b: Curriculum as everything students learn in school. Individualizing learning outcomes. Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS – Part I

➔ *Please review the following definitions to become familiar with terms you will be hearing and using daily.*

▣ **The Individualized Education Plan**

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a written plan authorized and developed under Public Law 94-142 which, revised, is now the Public Law 108-446 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) or IDEIA. The IEP is a written plan for any student with a disability who qualifies for and receives special education services in the public schools system. Four important requirements of IDEA concern:

- Notification
- Participation
- Content of the IEP
- Agency Responsibility

The IEP describes a student's needs, outlines the instructional program and defines types of services necessary to meet the student's needs. In order to develop this plan, a multi-disciplinary team meets to determine the needs of the student. This team includes the parents, the school administrator or designee, a general education teacher, the special education teacher, and the student, when appropriate. There may be times when the paraprofessional, any community agency representatives involved with the student, and anyone else involved in planning for the unique needs of the student may be invited to attend the meeting.

The team meets to determine the student's:

- Accomplishments
- Educational goals
- Supports needed for learning
- Plans for the future
- Related service needs

Based on these discussions, a plan is written which the student and parents agree to and sign.

▣ **The Individualized Family Service Plan**

The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed for young children with disabilities and their families. The impetus for the development of this plan came out of federal legislation that extended educational provisions under the age of five (Public Law 99-457). The purpose of the IFSP is to identify and facilitate the use of formal and informal resources that reflect the families' priorities for them and their children. The written IFSP must include:

- Information on the child's present level of functioning
- The strengths and needs of the child's family
- Major goals for the child and family with criteria, procedures and timelines
- Specific services necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family
- Dates for initiation and duration for services
- Assignment of an IEP manager most immediately relevant to the child's needs
- Steps to support the transition to preschool services

GLOSSARY OF TERMS – Part II

Below is a list of the *disability categories* currently within special education:

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Deaf-Blindness (DB)

Developmental Delay

Hearing Impairment (HI)

Intellectual Disability (ID)

Multiple Disabilities (MD)

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

Significant Emotional Disorder (SED)

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Speech or Language Impairment (SP/L or SLI)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Visually Impaired (VI)

What Language Are We Speaking ? (A guide to Special Education related acronyms)

Acronyms you might hear:

94-142	The Education of the handicapped Act that was passed in 1975, re-authorized as IDEA in 1990
ABC	Antecedent – Behavior – Consequence
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APE	Adaptive Physical Education
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BIP	Behavior Intervention/ Improvement Plan
BSP	Behavior Support Plan
CBI	Community Based Instruction
CDC	Career Development Center
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CPP	Colorado Preschool Program
CSAP	Colorado State Assessment Program
CSAP-A	Colorado State Assessment Program - Alternate
DB	Deaf / Blindness
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
ELL	English Language Learner
ESY	Extended School Year
FAPE	Fee Appropriate Public Education
FBA	Functional Behavior Analysis
FERPA	Family Education Rights & Privacy Act
HI	Hearing Impairment
IDEA/IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Act 1990 (originally P.L. 94-142, re-authorized in 2004 with “I” = Improvement added)
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment

MD	Multiple Disabilities
OHI	Other Health Impairment
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
OT	Occupational Therapist
PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
PSG	Post School Goals
PT	Physical Therapist
RN	Registered Nurse
SEAC	Special Education Advisory Committee
SED	Significant Emotional Disability
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SLI	Speech-Language Impairment
SLP	Speech-Language Pathologist
SSN	Significant Support Needs (severe needs)
SWAP	School to Work Alliance Project
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
VI	Vision Impairment

Health & Safety **Training**

Paraeducators have a high level of physical contact with their students. This may include assisting with eating, toileting, personal hygiene, lifting, using therapeutic and assistive communication equipment, pushing a wheelchair or assisting with a specific health related need. It is crucial to understand how to carry out assigned duties in order to keep yourself and the student safe. Any part of the job that requires the use of equipment, a specific procedure or physical contact with a student will be clearly defined and explained by a supervisory staff member (district nurse, special education teacher, physical or occupational therapist, speech therapist or vision/mobility teacher). During the instructional time, you will be observed completing the procedure, it is important to let the supervisory staff know if you don't understand or feel uncomfortable performing specific duties so that additional training can be provided. Asking to have directions or procedures repeated to assure you are comfortable is not a problem. It is your responsibility to perform the duty as directed/ instructed.

Some students will have a variety of health conditions and tasks required to care for those conditions (e.g.: feeding tubes, catheters, inhalers, AFO's, etc). Paraeducators are NOT to perform any care tasks without specific instruction from the professional overseeing those procedures; this may not necessarily be the Special Education teacher; more often it will be a District Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, or Speech Pathologist.

All the information in this paraeducator's training manual should be considered general guidelines. You must be trained by the professional involved (OT,PT,SLP) when there are specific plans.

Medication

State and Federal law prohibit the delivery of medications to students by an adult in the school unless the adult has had specific training and delegation under the supervision of the district's registered nurse. As a new employee it is unlikely that you will be asked to dispense medication to students. REMEMBER, you cannot deliver ANY type of (prescription or non-prescription) to a student unless you have had training that is specific to the student. Training for one student does NOT qualify you to deliver any type of medication to another student.

Behavior Management

When working with a student who has emotional or behavioral needs, the supervising teacher, behavioral specialist, or behavior coach will review the student's behavior support plan with you and provide training on how to implement the plan.

General Rules to follow;

- Implement and follow the behavior plan as written (no tweaking or interpretation).
- Make sure you understand the expectations and the consequences for the student if there are infractions.
- Provide structure and routine for the students.
- Watch for triggers to certain behaviors (i.e. seating arrangements, classroom demands, classroom routines, instructional methods, another student, occurrences prior to coming to class or school, specific foods, etc.). Report suspected triggers to your supervising teacher so he/she may share it with the team to problem solve and suggest changes.
- Don't take the students' actions or statements personally and don't hold a grudge! Start each day with a clean slate.

Your relationship with the student sets a precedent for the students' success.

Assisting Students with Eating

Many students with multiple needs require assistance with eating. This may include completely feeding a student, preparing food, providing physical prompts, or visually monitoring students during mealtimes.

When assisting a student by feeding them, first discuss the specific mealtime process with the supervising teacher and/or speech/language or occupational therapist.

Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- The student should be seated as upright as possible with head erect (neck not arched).
- Sit at eye level with the student.
- Mealtimes are social times. Using your best judgment if choking is a concern, talk with the student while feeding him/her and help to engage with his/her peers.
- Tell the student when you are about to give him/her a bite of food and allow a choice of what the food item could be. (i.e. you could say, "Would you like to have your macaroni and cheese or the green beans?").
- Never feed a student using a lightweight plastic utensil (it could break off in the student's mouth and cause injury).
- Do not use a fork unless specifically directed to do so.
- Use small amounts of food. Cut meats and other chewier foods into small pieces. All hot dogs, grapes, and similar food should be cut lengthwise to avoid circular shapes that can cause choking.
- Make sure all food has been swallowed before delivering the next bite.
- Place food on center of the student's tongue, press down gently and remove spoon with an upward movement that will encourage the student to clear the spoon with their upper lip.
- Give only 1 or 2 swallows of fluid at a time.
- Each school has an emergency response team if the need arises; review the process with the supervising teacher.

Seizures

Students with special needs may have seizure conditions. Typically, seizures are controlled with medication. However, if the student has seizures that will have a “Seizure Action Plan” written by the district nurse. See appendix for example. It will be reviewed prior to you working with the student.

General procedural guidelines include:

- Do not panic, be calm, and take control of the situation.
- Send another person for the supervising teacher.
- Note the time the seizure began. It is important to identify the start and stop time of the seizure to make prompt and informed decisions regarding the need for medical attention.
- If the student is not already lying down, ease him/her to the floor. Assistance may be needed. Lay the student on their side, protecting their head from contact with the floor.
- Position the student’s head so as to allow drainage from the mouth and/nose.
- Clear the area of objects that may cause injury.
- Do not attempt to contain the movements.
- Do not place anything in the student’s mouth.
- Loosen tight or restrictive clothing.
- If the student is in a wheelchair they may remain there unless they are injuring themselves on the chair. Loosen foot restraints or other straps that interfere with seizure related arm and leg movements.

REMEMBER: You can not stop or control a seizure.

The supervising teacher, district nurse or health clerk will make further decision regarding the need for medical attention. Assisting someone have a seizure can be a frightening experience and you may have questions regarding the episode, talk to your supervising teacher or district nurse.

Wheelchair Safety

Placing students in a wheelchair can be a complicated procedure and should be discussed and observed with a supervising teacher or therapist before attempting.

Unless a therapist has a specific procedure to be followed there are guideline below:

- ALWAYS set the wheelchair brakes before moving the student in or out of the wheel chair.
- Communicate with the student that they will be moved in or out of the wheelchair. Move them on the count of three out loud.
- Students should be placed in a wheelchair with their buttocks as far back in the seat as possible to encourage an upright posture.
- Fasten the hip or lap belts first. Secure to a snug position after the student is seated as far back in the seat as possible.
- Fasten shoulder straps next and then the foot straps.
- When escorting or pushing a student using a wheelchair, discuss where they are going. Do this regardless of the severity of their needs.
- Until directed to do otherwise, do not allow other students to push the wheelchair.
- ALWAYS set the brakes when stopped for more than a few seconds.
- When pushing a wheelchair outdoors do not run with the student in the chair.
- Turn the wheelchair around and take the student down a curb or incline backwards. Watch for gratings and cracks in sidewalks that front wheels can be caught in and cause the wheelchair to tip over or forward. Proceed across grating at an angle.
- When loading a wheelchair onto the bus lift, the wheelchair is backed on and brakes are locked. Ask for information regarding specific procedures with all wheelchair lifts.

Lifting

When working with a student who needs to be lifted in and out of a wheelchair or other equipment the supervising teacher/therapist will provide training about the procedure.

General rules to follow:

- Ask for assistance if the student weighs over 40 pounds, always use a 2 person lift procedure.
- When lifting, always bend your knees and lift with your legs, not with your back. Move your weight smoothly in a straight line. Avoid twisting your body.
- Keep your legs shoulder width apart to provide stability.
- When lifting smaller students support him/her with an arm around their back and under their mid-thighs. Hold the student's body close to your while lifting and carrying him/her.
- NEVER lift a student by pulling on their arms this could result in dislocating their joints. Not to be confused with holding the trunk and arms at the elbows.

Toileting

Some students require assistance using the restroom. This assistance may include:

- Changing a diaper and cleaning the student
- Assisting the student to and from the toilet
- Cleaning the student following the use of the toilet
- Physically assisting a student with pulling pants down and/or up.
- Visually monitoring the student to be sure he/she has successfully used the toilet.
- Assisting with feminine hygiene.

General Guidelines to follow:

If assisting the student with toileting and the procedure requires physical contact you should wear disposable gloves. Refer to “Universal Precautions”, page 12 for additional information. Also, see appendix for proper procedure for using gloves.

Diapering:

If the student requires a diaper change you will receive training for this. For safety and liability purposes, if possible, a diaper change should have 2 attendants.

You will be required to chart the following for each procedure: time of procedure, skin integrity, color, odor, amount, and consistency of the urine and excrement, as well as how the procedure is tolerated by the student.

Remember: the dignity of the student must be respected at all times. Even though some aspects of this job are difficult and unpleasant it must remain a dignified and personal process for the student.

101 Ways to Praise a Child

Wow · Way to go · You're special · Outstanding · Excellent · Great · Good · Neat · Well done · Remarkable · I knew you could do it · I'm proud of you · Super Star ★ · Nice work · Looking good · You're on top of it · You're catching on · Now you've got it ☀️ · How smart · Good job · That's incredible · Hot dog · Remarkable job · You're Beautiful · You're a winner · You make me happy · Hip, Hip Hooray · You're important · Magnificent · Beautiful · Fantastic · You're on target · You're on your way · 🌸 How nice · You're Spectacular · You're Darling 💕 · Super · Super job · Beautiful work 🌿 · Good for you · Nothing can stop you now · Dynamite 💣 · You're fantastic · Awesome · You're precious · Fantastic job · You've discovered the secret · Bingo · Great discovery · You are responsible · You are exciting · You are fun 😄 · You're a real trooper · Marvelous · Terrific · You're growing up · Outstanding performance · You tried hard · You figured it out · What a good listener · You're a treasure · You mean a lot to me · You're a good friend ❤️ · That's correct · A big hug · What an imagination · You learned it right · You're incredible · Now you're flying · Bravo · Beautiful · I like you · I respect you · You're Sensational · Phenomenal · A+ job · Hooray for you · You're unique · You care · Creative job · You belong · You brighten my day · Super work · That's the best · You made my day · Say I love you! ❤️ · Beautiful sharing · You mean the world to me · You're important · You've got a friend · You're a joy · You make me laugh · You're A-OK-my buddy · I trust you · You're perfect · You're wonderful · A big kiss · Exceptional performance · p.s. Remember, a smile is worth 1000 Words!

Paraprofessional Progress Notes

Week of _____

Student(s) _____

Teacher _____

Paraprofessional _____

<i>In regards to the items below, please mark one of the three ratings</i>	<i>exceptional</i>	<i>meets standard level</i>	<i>needs improvement (see preceptor comments)</i>	Comments
Behavior is professional - Confidentiality is respected				
Arrives on time and is dependable				
Follows directives from supervisor				
Knowledgeable about the IEPs of the students they work with				
Seeks appropriate consultation re: student needs				
Develops positive relationships with students and staff				
Asks appropriate questions				
Displays positive attitude towards feedback and uses feedback to improve work with students				

Teacher Comments:

SIGNATURE PAGE

After you have completed reading this manual, if you have any questions regarding material presented, please discuss it with your supervising teacher. Sign and date below, detach the page and return it to your supervising teacher who should forward it to the Principal. You may keep the manual for future reference.

I have read and understand the contents of the Special Education Paraprofessional Handbook.

Name: _____
(Printed) *(Signature)*

Date: _____