



Special Education Paraprofessional Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What qualifications must paraprofessionals meet under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)?

Answer: NCLB required that paraprofessionals have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and meet one of the following qualifications if the paraprofessional will perform instructional duties in a Title I, Part A program:

- Have completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education defined as completion of 48 semester hours of college coursework; or
- Have obtained an associate's degree (or higher); or
- Have taken and passed the WorkKeys test, Parapro Test or the Oklahoma General Education Test

Question: How is the term "paraprofessional" defined for these requirements? [Title I, Section 119 (g) (2)]

Answer: For the purposes of Title I, Part A the United States Department of Education (USDE) guidance defines a paraprofessional as an employee of a district who provides instructional support in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds. "Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support," includes those who:

- provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher,
- assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials,
- provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory,
- conduct parental involvement activities,
- provide instructional support in a library or media center,
- act as a translator, or
- provide instructional services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher.

Because paraprofessionals provide instructional support, they should not be providing planned indirect instruction, or introducing to students new skills, concepts, or academic content. Individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are not considered paraprofessionals under Title I, Part A.

Question: What qualifications does the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require Special Education paraprofessionals have?

Answer: Section 300.156 states that (a) "the State Education Agency (SEA) must establish and maintain qualifications to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out the purposes of this part are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including that those personnel have the content knowledge and skills to serve children with disabilities."

Question: Do Special Education Paraprofessionals have to meet these requirements?

Answer: Yes. In addition to the Title I, Part A requirements listed above, a special education paraprofessional has to meet the following:

- Complete the Oklahoma Special Education Paraprofessional Training (Career Technology Centers) or other State approved Local Education Agency (LEA) training.
- Complete and maintain training and skills in Cardiovascular Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid.
- Complete training in Universal Precautions/Bloodborne Pathogens Training.
- Complete an additional 6 hours of professional development and Universal Precautions/Bloodborne Pathogens each school year thereafter.

Question: What do participants do after completing the Paraprofessional Special Education Training?

Answer: Participants must work with their school district to complete the Special Education Paraprofessional Application and mail it to the Oklahoma State Department of Education-Special Education Services Department. Your application packet must include:

- A copy of your current Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Training card (front and back),
- A copy of your current First Aid card (front and back),
- Certificate of completion of Paraprofessional Special Education Training,
- Job Description for Paraprofessional/Teacher Assistant,
- Daily work schedule outlining duties and responsibilities performed, and
- School Site Emergency Procedures

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact Tricia Hansen, Special Education Specialist, by email at Tricia.Hansen@sde.ok.gov or by calling 405-522-1463.