



Arc Guide to Special Education Paraprofessional Aides

Students with disabilities have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The law states students with disabilities on an Individual Education Program (IEP) can benefit from learning within their regular education classroom and should have every opportunity to participate in all activities. According to FAPE and LRE, students with disabilities, including those in public or private schools, are to be educated with students without disabilities.

Some students may need additional staff supports and services to be successful in the classroom. A paraprofessional may be one option to help students with disabilities learn and participate with students with and without disabilities to enhance the program and instruction for the student. The need and role for a paraprofessional is determined through the special education evaluation process and documented on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan.

- A comprehensive evaluation will result in an evaluation summary that should provide a statement of need for special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided for the student to receive FAPE in a LRE.

Based on the results of the evaluation,

- The IEP team will need to consider unique approaches to support the student through shared learning, teaching styles, physical arrangements of the classroom, curriculum modifications, peer mediated supports, equipment, etc.
- The IEP team will also decide when and how often the student needs the paraprofessional. For example, will the paraprofessional be needed throughout the entire school day, on the bus, during a specific class time or during transitions (class changes, etc.)?
- The IEP will include a statement of the student's need for and the specific responsibilities of a paraprofessional. The paraprofessional can assist the student(s) on IEP goals and objectives. The paraprofessional may also assist with accommodations required due to the student's disability. Some of the job responsibilities may include assistance with academic skills, behavior management, and self-care.
- A statement of program modifications supports or changes will be on the IEP. This may be called the services page and is often where the need for a paraprofessional will be described.



General requirements for a Paraprofessional:

- A bachelor or associate's degree or equivalent is preferred
- Personal care assistance, crisis prevention intervention and van training
- Understand cognitive, physical, emotional, social characteristics and vulnerability of students with disabilities
- Develop knowledge and skills on roles and responsibilities, student's rights to privacy and reporting, handling emergencies and building orientation. etc.
- Attend yearly training opportunities
- Required to work under the direction of a licensed teacher and/or supervision of a school nurse
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to maintain confidentiality

Administrative and instructional duties may include:

- Carry out programs and tutoring activities created by teacher
- Help prepare instructional materials such as art supplies and other materials
- Assist a teacher with behavior supports
- Respond to requests for help, observe learning difficulties and report to teacher
- Assist teacher in an unbiased observation and data recording of student's progress
- Provide special help - drilling with flash cards, spelling, and play activities, etc.
- Reinforce small group learning while teacher works with other students

Instructional duties the paraprofessional may NOT perform:

- Full responsibility for a supervising and planning activities of the classroom
- Prepare class lesson plans and initiate instructions
- Grade subjective or essay tests or assign grades to students
- Substitute for certified teachers unless s/he possesses the appropriate substitute teacher certification and is hired as a substitute

MN Statute 3525.0210(3)

Paraprofessional/Aide (para) of instruction MN 125A.08



For further information or advocacy services, contact The Arc Minnesota at 952-920-0855 or toll-free at 833.450.1494 or visit www.arcminnesota.org. (Please note: *This document is not legal advice, and should not be construed as such. Thus, no information herein should replace the sound advice of an attorney.*)

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