

# Supporting Paraprofessionals to Support Students with IEPs

Iris Jacobson  
Dawn Merth-Johnson  
October 12, 2022



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**Public Instruction**  
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent

# Agenda

- Definition and Qualifications of a Paraprofessional
- Comparison of Teacher vs Paraprofessional
- Comparison of Intervener vs Paraprofessional
- Paraprofessional in Speech and Language
- Training of a Paraprofessional
- Roles of a Paraprofessional

# Definition

PI 34.01 Definitions. (4) "Aide" means a school employee who works under the direct supervision of a licensed teacher in a school or district whose responsibilities include, but are not limited to, supporting the lesson plan of the licensed teacher, providing technical assistance to the teacher, helping with classroom control or management, and other duties as assigned.

[Wisconsin Special Education Paraprofessionals](#)

# Special Education Program Aide License

PI 34.34 (18) SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AIDE LICENSE. Any person employed by a school district as a special education program aide shall hold a license under this subsection. A license as a special education program aide may be issued to an applicant who **is at least 18 years of age** and is recommended by the district administrator of the employing school district, the administrator of a CESA or his or her designated official to receive a license under this section.

# Special Education Program Aide License Cont.

**Effective August 1, 2018**, all applicants for a Special Education Program Aide license **must hold a high school diploma or an equivalent degree**. It will be the responsibility of the employing school district to attest on the PI-1622-Aide form that the applicant holds a high school diploma or an equivalent degree.

# Who needs that license?

A paraprofessional who is assigned to support the provision of special education services pursuant to an individualized education program (IEP) must hold the Special Education Program Aide license (#0070), unless the individual holds any valid Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) license.

# Who needs that license cont.?



A paraprofessional hired to provide support to students with IEPs during transportation to and from school is also required to have a SPED Paraprofessional license.

# Teacher vs Paraprofessional Roles

Teacher Role	Paraprofessional Role
Planning and delivering instruction	Supporting lesson plan of teacher
Diagnosing learning needs	Providing technical assistance to teacher
Prescribing content delivery via classroom activities	Helping with classroom management
Assessing student learning and evaluating the effects of instruction	Paraprofessionals <b>CANNOT</b> be assigned teacher duties
Reporting outcomes to administrators and parents	Collect data and report on students' progress



# Interveners vs Paraprofessionals

## Comparison of Interveners and Paraprofessionals

Intervener	Paraprofessional
◆ Works under the direction of the classroom teacher (regardless of supervisory funding source)	◆ Works under the direction of the classroom teacher
◆ Abides by district or agency policies	◆ Abides by district or agency policies
◆ Assigned to work one-to-one with a student who is deafblind to facilitate the process of intervention	◆ Usually works with groups of students but can work one-to-one when assigned by the teacher
◆ Must have comprehensive specialized training in <i>deafblindness</i>	◆ Typically does not receive disability specific training
◆ Has skills in deafblind intervention including communication methods, environmental access, sensory loss, deafblind instructional strategies, and how to create independence rather than dependence	◆ Has varying levels of skills dependent on assignment, experience, and training
◆ Prepares materials for the one student who is deafblind with whom he/she works in coordination with the teacher	◆ Responsible for materials preparation for entire class as assigned by the teacher (e.g., copying, cutting, activity preparation)
◆ Not assigned to do classroom maintenance because of the continuous one-to-one time required by the student with deafblindness	◆ Responsible for classroom maintenance as assigned by the teacher (e.g., bulletin boards, setting up and cleaning up materials)
◆ Usually attends regularly scheduled planning and feedback meetings with the teacher and other team members	◆ Typically does not attend planning meetings
◆ Participates as an active member of the student's team including attendance at IEP meetings in order to contribute valuable day-to-day knowledge of the student	◆ Generally does not attend IEP meetings
◆ Not generally assigned to additional school duties because of one-to-one time required by the student	◆ May be assigned to additional school duties such as lunchroom, bus, playground, etc.
◆ Facilitates the student's connection to others by explaining and modeling the student's specific communication system, acting as a bridge to the world, and creating a safe and supportive environment that encourages successful interactions	◆ Typically is not required to facilitate communication connections between students and others

## Comparison of Interveners and Paraprofessionals

Alsop, L., Robinson, C., Goehl, K., Lace, J., Belote, M., & Rodriguez-Gil, G. (2007). *Interveners in the classroom: Guidelines for teams working with students who are deafblind*. Logan, UT: SKI-HI Institute.

# Paraprofessionals in Speech and Language

- Maintaining and programming communication equipment
- Providing clerical and scheduling support
- Assisting the SLP with supporting student behavior and social engagement
- Collecting data for SLP
- Reviewing & reinforcing skills introduced by SLP

[The Use of Paraprofessionals to Support Speech-Language Pathologists](#)

# Training for Paraprofessionals

- Paraprofessionals must be supported by teachers and administrators in how communication channels and systems of communication are set up with families.
- Not only should paraprofessionals have clear “how” and “what” communication channels established, but they schools should also establish protocols in communicating with families to clearly outline the roles of the teachers compared to the roles of paraprofessionals.
- In addition, they may need training to better understand and build empathy for families of students with more significant needs so that they are able to understand and support individual family hopes, dreams, fears, and concerns.

# Collaboration



- Paraprofessionals need systems in place to receive updates and to be able to communicate information and data to other educators about individual students.
- Paraprofessionals must be kept up to date on IEP related changes that might impact the supports they provide to individual students.

[Parker, 2018](#)

# Communication

**How do I find out how  
my child is doing?**





# Confidentiality

## The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

federal law that protects the privacy of student education records

**The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**  
national standard that protects sensitive patient health information

<b>FERPA</b> The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law enacted in 1974 that protects the privacy of student education records. The Act serves two primary purposes: 1. Given parents or eligible students more control of their educational records. 2. Prohibits educational institutions from disclosing "personally identifiable information in education records" without written consent. 	 • Any public or private school: - Elementary - Secondary - Post secondary • Any state or local education agency Any of the above must receive funds under an applicable program of the US Department of Education.	 <b>Student Education Records:</b> Records that contain information directly related to a student and which are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution.	 • School officials • Schools to which a student is transferring • Specific officials for audit or evaluation purposes • Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student • Organizations conducting research studies for or on behalf of the school • Accrediting organizations • Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies • State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific state law • To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
<b>HIPAA</b> The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a national standard that protects sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge. Via the Privacy Rule, the main goal is to: • Ensure that individuals' health information is properly protected while allowing the flow of health information needed to provide and promote high-quality health care and to protect the public's health and well-being. 	 • Every healthcare provider who electronically transmits health information in connection with certain transactions • Health plans • Healthcare clearinghouses • Business associates that act on behalf of a covered entity, including claims processing, data analysis, utilization review, and billing	 <b>Protected Health Information:</b> Individually identifiable health information that is transmitted or maintained in any form or medium (electronic, oral, or paper) by a covered entity, or its business associates, including certain educational and employment records.	 • To the individual • Treatment, payment, and healthcare operations • Uses and disclosures with opportunity to agree or object by using the individual or giving opportunity to agree or object • Incident or as otherwise permitted use and disclosure • Public interest and benefit activities (e.g., public health activities, activities of abuse or neglect, disasters, research, law enforcement purposes, without threat to health and safety) • Limited dataset for the purposes of research, public health, or healthcare operations

## FERPA and HIPAA

# Roles of a Paraprofessional

- Collaborate with members of the instructional team
- Assist with supporting student behavior and social engagement.
- Support the lesson plan through review and reinforcement of skills
- Provide technical assistance to the teacher and/or student
- Assist with monitoring student progress and data collection as directed by the teacher
- Provide supports, modifications and adapted materials (e.g., visual schedules, checklists or directions, opportunities for choice, physical assistance, communication supports) as directed by the teacher or related service provider

# Roles of a Paraprofessional

[Understanding the Role of Paraprofessionals in Your Child's Education in Inclusive Classrooms \(TIES Center Brief #7\)](#)



Understanding the Role of Paraprofessionals in Your  
Child's Education in Inclusive Classrooms



Ricki Sabia and Martha L. Thurlow



# Levels of Support

**Low:** always available, but not needed on a regular basis by the student

**Medium:** necessary on a regular basis

**High:** support is absolutely necessary for the student to learn and must be provided consistently; most intrusive in nature.



# What paraprofessionals shouldn't do:

- Provide initial instruction
- Make decisions about which activities, lessons, content, or environments a student can access (especially when assigned to one student on a regular basis)

Parker, 2018

# Additional Considerations

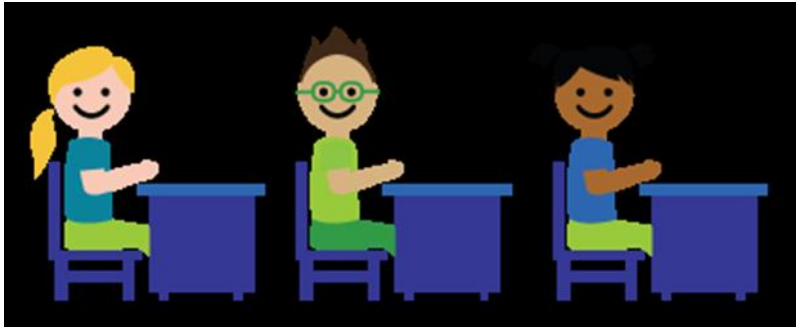
- Limiting close proximity when possible
- Supporting Independence
- Planning for natural supports
- Determining when Paraprofessionals are not needed

# Natural supports

Natural supports refer to the support and assistance that naturally flows from the associations and relationships typically developed in natural environments such as the family, school, work and community. These relationships and the support and assistance they offer, maintain and enhance the quality and security of life for people with disabilities.



# Why are we talking about independence?



Research has shown that some students that receive direct one-on-one support from a paraprofessional have fewer social relationships with peers and less independence than students who do not receive one-on-one support. Ensuring paraprofessional “skills” focus on **improving the independence of students** in social and academic settings is a critical component to an effective system of support.

[Parker, 2018](#)

# Questions?



# Resources

## **Wisconsin Special Education Paraprofessionals**

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/educators/initiatives/paraprofessionals>

## **Requirements for Special Education Program Aides**

<https://dpi.wi.gov/licensing/apply-educator-license/special-ed-aide>

## **FAQs About Special Education Paraprofessionals, Information Update**

**Bulletin 10.5** <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/laws-procedures-bulletins/bulletins/10-05>

# Resources

**Supporting Paraprofessionals to Support Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP)s** (Parker, 2018) <https://awsa.memberclicks.net/update-article--supporting-paraprofessionals-to-support-students-with-individualized-education-programs--iep-s>

**Understanding the Role of Paraprofessionals in Your Child's Education in Inclusive Classrooms**  
<https://files.nceo.info/files/dRhpeQQeNf/understanding-the-role-of-paraprofessionals-in-your-childs-education-in-inclusive-classrooms?preferredLocale=en-US>

**The Use of Paraprofessionals in Speech and Language Programs**  
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/sl-paraprofessionals.pdf>



# For More Information



**Iris Jacobson, Education Consultant,  
Special Education Team**

**[iris.jacobson@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:iris.jacobson@dpi.wi.gov)**



**Dawn Merth-Johnson, Education  
Consultant, Speech-Language and Assistive  
Technology**

**[Dawn.Merth-Johnson@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Dawn.Merth-Johnson@dpi.wi.gov)**