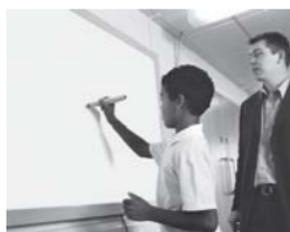




Frequently Asked QUESTIONS About PARAPROFESSIONALS



SERC
State Education Resource Center

What is Connecticut's definition of a paraprofessional?

A paraprofessional is an employee who assists teachers and/or other professional educators or therapists in the delivery of instructional and related services to students. The paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of the teacher or other certified or licensed professional. The ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional programs, including assessment of student progress, is a collaborative effort of certified and licensed staff.

What are appropriate roles for paraprofessionals?

The following are ten examples of appropriate and effective utilization of paraprofessionals, taken from the model of roles, responsibilities, and training of paraprofessionals identified in *Connecticut's Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21 (2008)*:

1. Participation in regularly scheduled meetings and sharing relevant information.
2. Implementation of proactive behavior and learning strategies.
3. Use of strategies that provide learner independence and positive self-esteem.
4. Assistance in accommodating and modifying learning strategies based on learning styles, ability levels, and other individual differences.
5. Review and reinforcement of learning activities.
6. Assistance in engaging learners through an awareness of cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development.
7. Use of developmentally and age-appropriate reinforcement and other learning activities.
8. Collection of data on learner activity.
9. Carry out functional (informal) assessment activities.
10. Participation in continuing professional development.

Is the teacher the paraprofessional's supervisor?

Yes, but there is a difference between the person responsible for hiring and evaluation of performance (an administrator) and the person directing day-to-day work with students (the teacher). Often the teacher provides the day-to-day supervision of the paraprofessional, while an administrator, such as a principal, program manager, or special education director, completes the evaluation. According to the Guidelines, "Teachers should have supervisory functions as to program implementation, including planning, assigning duties, and checking with paraeducators as to their comprehension of their assigned duties. Teachers must not be expected to have administrative management duties such as the hiring or firing of paraeducators. Those duties belong to the administration."

What is the definition of “direct supervision?”

According to federal guidelines in the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act**: “A paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of a teacher if (1) the teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carries out, and evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working, and (2) the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher.”

Can a paraprofessional see a student’s Individual Education Program (IEP)? Attend a student’s PPT meeting?

There is no state or federal regulation prohibiting a paraprofessional from seeing a student’s IEP. In fact, the *Connecticut State Department of Education* (CSDE) encourages paraprofessionals whose support includes students with disabilities to have an understanding of the IEP information that is pertinent to their role as an implementor.

Paraprofessional attendance at Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings is an individual district and school-based decision. It is important that district or school personnel explain their policy on the attendance of paraprofessionals at PPTs to both parents and school staff. If a paraprofessional spends an extensive amount of time with a student, a decision might be made for that paraprofessional to attend the student’s PPT. If a paraprofessional is required in the IEP and does not attend a student’s PPT meeting, it is the responsibility of the student’s teacher and the paraprofessional’s supervisor to communicate in detail with the paraprofessional about the student before and after the PPT.

Is there any research that shows a relationship between paraprofessionals and student achievement?

Recent studies demonstrate the positive impact that paraprofessionals can have on student achievement when they receive ongoing professional development, training, and supervision. The Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project has compiled a list of research studies that link paraprofessionals and student achievement: www.ritap.org/TA/content/ResearchOnTAs.pdf.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has composed a list of study abstracts linking paraprofessionals and student achievement: www.aft.org/psrp/topics/download/ParasandStudAchieve.pdf.

Is there any research on strategies for assigning paraprofessionals year to year?

This specific question has not been explicitly researched. Dr. Michael Giangreco, a professor at the University of Vermont, has conducted a number of research studies regarding the effects of paraprofessional support on students with disabilities. Full-text pdfs are available on his project Web site: www.uvm.edu/~mgiangre.

What is the paraprofessional's role in Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)?

SRBI is *Connecticut's Framework for Response to Intervention (RTI)*, a process used to determine if and how students respond to instruction, including social/emotional learning. RTI provides a framework for school teams for designing, implementing, and evaluating educational interventions in a timely manner. Collaboration among all school staff ensures positive learning experiences and outcomes for struggling students whose needs are identified early. Paraprofessionals can be a valuable part of SRBI teams by assisting classroom teachers and special educators with screening, assisting teachers with benchmarking and progress monitoring assessments, recording observations of behavior and learning strategies, entering assessment data into a management system, serving as a member of the intervention team, and collaborating with teachers to provide support for students, implementing interventions, and participating in school-wide professional development.

Can a paraprofessional act as a substitute for a teacher if the paraprofessional is not certified?

Paraprofessionals who have a BA can serve as a short-term substitute (in the same position for up to 39 days). Districts must get approval for any substitute who is serving in the same classroom/position for more than 39 days.

Can a paraprofessional serve in an in-school suspension room if the paraprofessional is not certified?

The new in-school suspension legislation does not require certified staff to oversee the in-school suspension room, so a paraprofessional would be allowed to do so. Appendix E of the new *Guidelines for In-School and Out-of-School Suspension* (2009) provides CSDE's position concerning what an effective in-school suspension program should look like:

www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/pressroom/In_School_Suspension_Guidance.pdf.

Can a paraprofessional be asked to perform personal care duties (i.e. toileting)?

Toileting is an activity of daily living and generally falls under the responsibility of a paraprofessional. If the child has special needs, the *Guidelines for Special Health Procedures for School Nurses* (1997) does say that the school nurse should assess the situation to ensure that the proper position, equipment available, etc., are in place and that any training for the paraprofessional should be provided. This document is available in school nurses' offices or by calling (860) 807-2108.

Does the CSDE have paraprofessional information?

Yes, the CSDE has a Web page dedicated to Paraprofessional Information and Resources: www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali. Information is also available on the State Education Resource Center (SERC) Web site: www.ctserc.org. Click on “Projects and Initiatives,” then “Paraprofessionals as Partners.”

What resources are available for the training of paraprofessionals?

SERC provides many professional development opportunities through its *Paraprofessionals as Partners* Initiative. Its goal is to enhance the skills of paraprofessionals providing instructional support to students, including students with disabilities, in various educational settings. Through a variety of professional development opportunities, paraprofessionals working in collaborative partnerships with general and special education teachers and support services professionals can acquire skills to enhance their ability to effectively provide instruction and other direct services to meet the diverse needs of all students. In addition, SERC coordinates an annual paraprofessional conference in the fall of each school year. **For more information, please contact Stefanie Carbone, Consultant, SERC, at (860) 632-1485 x306 or carbone@ctserc.org.**

The *Capitol Region Education Council* (CREC) also offers a variety of professional development and job opportunities for paraprofessionals and aspiring paraprofessionals, including a comprehensive job-embedded professional development curriculum called The Compass. This series of modules, aligned with National Paraprofessional Standards, has been designed to enhance the paraprofessionals’ skills in working with students in educational settings. More information can be found on the paraprofessional page of the CREC Web site: www.crec.org/paraprofessional or by contacting your local Regional Educational Service Center (RESC).

The CSDE’s professional development for paraprofessionals is coordinated by **Iris White, Consultant, CSDE**. **For more information, please contact her at (860) 713-6794 or iris.white@ct.gov.**

What is the Parapro Assessment? What does it cost? When is it offered?

The Parapro Assessment is a test for paraprofessionals developed by the **Educational Testing Service (ETS)** that can be used by states and school districts to comply with the **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act**. Testing is one of three options for qualifying paraprofessionals according to the law. The other two are possession of an Associate’s degree (or higher) or two years of college/university coursework. The cost is \$45. More information regarding this assessment can be found on the ETS Web site: www.ets.org/parapro.

What resources are available to help paraprofessionals prepare for the Parapro?

Test-at-a-Glance (TAAG) contains the test specifications and sample questions with answers and explanations. It is available free of charge from the ETS Web site:

www.ets.org/Media/Tests/ParaPro_Assessment/0755.pdf.

Reducing Test Anxiety helps test-takers learn how to recognize and cope with test anxiety:

www.ets.org/Media/Tests/PRAXIS/pdf/01361anxiety.pdf.

ParaPro Assessment Study Guide (Print and eBook versions are available for ordering). There are three ways to order copies of this booklet:

1. **Call** ETS at 1-800-772-9476 Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. EST. Caller must have a valid American Express, Discover, MasterCard, or VISA to purchase via the telephone.
2. **Send** an order to ETS through the mail with the appropriate fee (\$25). Be sure to include the following information with the order: Paraprofessional Study Guide, Item #997331, Name, Address, and Daytime Telephone Number. The mailing address is: The Praxis Series-ParaPro, Educational Testing Service, N00, P.O. Box 6058, Princeton, NJ 08541-6058.
3. **Order** at the ETS Online Store at www.ets.org/store. The caller will need an American Express, Discover, Master Card, or Visa to purchase the guide online.

ParaPro Practice Test is a full-length practice test that was retired after being used in actual test administrations. It will give test-takers an idea of how they might score on the test. The retired test comes with a list of correct answers plus a score conversion chart. Price per practice test is \$12.00. Purchase discounts also are available. As above, contact ETS to order.

Online Tutorial for the Internet-based assessment will cover all one needs to know to complete the ParaPro Assessment. To view the online tutorial, go to www.ibt.ets.org/parapro/candidate/tutorial_welcome.jsp.

Free online practice is available at www.testpreview.com.



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