

Paraprofessional Handbook



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Introduction

Thank you for joining the COSSA team. We are so very glad to have you here to support our students. We appreciate all the hard work our paraprofessionals do every day to make a difference in a child's life. You will probably have questions as you begin this new year regarding the specific building that you will be working in. Your supervising teacher will orient you to your job responsibilities. Your supervising teacher will have a system for communication.

If you are going to be absent for any reason, your supervising teacher will want to know as soon as possible. S/he may want you to contact them at home, if need be, and will have a procedure that is specific to their particular school that will be followed in case of your absence. Questions regarding pay, general leave, sick time and benefits are covered in the COSSA Policy Manual.

The Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook was created to provide paraprofessionals with information and resources to be successful in their careers. This document should not be considered to be a training module, but rather treated as a wealth of information and strategies for paraprofessionals. The Administrative rule adopted by the State Board of Education and approved by the Idaho Legislature states, "Educational agencies may employ paraprofessional personnel to assist in the provision of special education and related services to students with disabilities if they meet standards established by the State Department of Education." (IDAPA 08.02.03.g). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that districts ensure all paraprofessionals have a high school diploma or equivalent AND meet a rigorous standard of quality by:

- (1) completing 32 college academic credits, or (2) obtaining an academic associate's or higher degree, or (3) passing the Praxis Paraprofessional Exam.

Terms of Employment

Your job as a Paraprofessional is based on year-to-year employment. You are not guaranteed a return to a particular school each fall. Employment is based on student population and need. If your supervising teacher and school administrator are satisfied with the job that you are doing, they may recommend you for hire in the fall of the next school year. If the population of students with special needs is large enough to merit the continued support of a Paraprofessional, you will probably be asked to return. If you are interested in summer employment there is potential if your school's special education program has students who need year around educational services.



Chain of Responsibility

Each school district, and in some cases each building will have its own chain of responsibility. Special education is unique because they also have their own hierarchy. If problems arise the Paraprofessional should contact the supervising teacher about the problem. If the problem isn't resolved, the next step is to contact the building administrator. If the problem is still not resolved or the Paraprofessional is not satisfied then he/she should contact the Director of Special Education.



The first rule of thumb is to always contact the person you have the concern with. Try to work out the problem. If the person is unwilling to resolve the problem, then work through the chain of responsibility until the problem is solved. Ethically, you should always try to work out the problem to the best of your ability before involving administrators.

Description of Paraprofessionals in Schools

According to the Idaho Special Education Manual 2017:

The district may employ paraprofessionals, assistants, and aides who are appropriately trained and supervised to assist in the provision of special education and related services to students with disabilities if they meet standards established by the State Department of Education (SDE) (find the “Standards for Paraprofessionals Supporting Students with Special Needs” on the SDE website).

Appropriate duties to be performed by paraprofessionals are:

- 1) *Provide one-on-one services for students as specified in the students' IEP;*
- 2) *Assist with classroom management and organizing materials;*
- 3) *Provide assistance in a computer lab or media center;*
- 4) *Conduct parental involvement activities;*
- 5) *Act as a translator;*

- 6) *Assist in provision of services only under the direct supervision of a certified teacher or related service provider, specifically:*
- a) *A teacher/related service provider plans instruction and evaluates student achievement; and works in conjunction with the teacher or related service provider as determined by the student's IEP.*

Supervising Teacher (school site)

The Supervising Teacher will provide guidance to the Paraprofessional on activities in specific job settings within their actual work schedule.

Paraprofessional

The Paraprofessional is required to read the Paraprofessional Handbook. He/she must sign the verification form located at the back of this handbook and send it to Tammie Anderson, Director of Special Education at the COSSA district building. The Paraprofessional is required to assist in their own professional development by choosing goals to work on with their supervising teacher.

IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that supports special education and related service programming for children and youth with disabilities. It was originally known as the Education of Handicapped Children Act, passed in 1975. In 1990, amendments to the law were passed, effectively changing the name to IDEA. In 1997 and again in 2004, additional amendments were passed to ensure equal access to education.

This federal legislation is designed to ensure that children with disabilities be granted a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). IDEA does the following:

- Ensures that all children with an identified disability receive special education and related services to address their individual needs.
- Ensures that children with disabilities be prepared for employment and independent living.
- Ensures that the rights of children with disabilities and their families are protected under the law.
- Assesses and ensures the efforts of institutions providing services to persons with disabilities.
- Provides assistance to states, localities, federal agencies, and educational service agencies in providing for the education of children with disabilities.

Source: <https://www.washington.edu/doit/what-individuals-disabilities-education-act>

Least Restrictive Environment

Many Paraprofessionals complete their job assignments in general education classroom settings. This is part of the COSSA philosophy of “inclusive education.” This means that wherever possible we attempt to provide educational experiences for students in the general education classrooms. A teacher within your school will be your immediate supervisor. You will need to know what that teacher’s expectations are for the students with whom you will be working.

	3 years once a student is made eligible for services.
IEP	Individualized Education Program-written document that is developed for each eligible student with a disability and documents the specially designed instruction and related services. The IEP is developed, reviewed and revised at least annually.
Annual IEP Goal	A measurable statement of desired student progress.
Progress Monitoring	Data that is collected to monitor a student’s progress toward annual IEP goals.
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan- A plan comprising practical and specific strategies designed to increase or reduced definable behavior. These strategies address preventative techniques, teaching replacement behaviors, how to respond to or resolve behaviors, and crisis management, if necessary.



Confidentiality and FERPA

Confidentiality Considerations

The purpose of confidentiality is to protect our students and is not just about following the law. As parents, we would not want our children discussed in the teacher's lounge or in the office where others could hear. It is important that we protect educational records and personally identifiable information about our students.

Educational records might include any records related directly to the student or that indicate personally identifiable information, and any records that are maintained by an educational agency or institution. Some examples are:

- Emails with student names and information
- Health records
- Confidential special education records
- Report cards & progress reports
- Progress monitoring data with student names
- Parent communication (e.g. Communication log, texts, phone calls)

Personally identifiable information might include:

- Student's name, parents' names, address, and date of birth
- Information about the student's disability that might allow someone to identify them.
- Information about the student's behavior or skills that might allow someone to identify them.

You Won't Believe the Latest Rumor About

Paraprofessionals, as all school employees, have an ethical responsibility to represent the school, classroom teacher, the district, and COSSA in a positive and professional manner. Yet, classrooms, and schools are ripe environments for rumor and gossip. Sometimes, the social fabric of the school seems held together by the latest dirt that someone has on so-and-so. Rumors and gossip run counter to many ethical principles. Moreover, they can destroy morale, damage teamwork, and even lead to legal claims of discrimination, harassment, and defamation.

- Make sure that you are aware of your paraprofessional's ethical responsibilities.
- Remind other team members that they are responsible for stopping the spread of rumors. Failure to act is as harmful as participating in the gossip mill.
- Be a model for appropriate behavior. Do not participate in spreading rumors and squelch them when you are on the receiving end. It is a good idea to respond to gossip

by saying something like, “I really don’t want to hear gossip. Neither you nor I would want others to gossip about us.”

FERPA Overview

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
 - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
 - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
 - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
 - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
 - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
 - Accrediting organizations;
 - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
 - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
 - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Laws & Guidance,
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>



Communication with Teachers/Staff

Confidentiality of student information should always be considered when discussing students with teachers, staff and even other students within the school. Information or concerns about students should only be discussed with those individuals with a legitimate educational interest in the student. If you are unsure who has a legitimate educational interest, ask your supervisor.

Below are examples of questions you may be asked and how you might respond:

Question	Possible Response
<p>“Is Tabitha doing better now that she isn’t in Ms. Ingram’s class all day?”</p>	<p>“I appreciate that you are concerned about Tabitha, but unfortunately I can’t talk about that.” OR “I’m not sure if I can share that with you since you aren’t her teacher this year. Could you ask Mrs. Houck about it? Thanks for understanding.”</p>
<p>“Does Jesse need special math classes this year?”</p>	<p>“I can’t share information about student placements, sorry.” OR “Information like that is confidential, so I can’t talk with you about it. Thanks for understanding!”</p>
<p>“Is there anything I can do to support Adrianna when I see her on the playground or in the lunchroom?”</p>	<p>“That’s a great question! I would suggest that you check with Mr. Hunter to see what you might be able to do.” OR “Thanks for asking. I’ll let Mr. Hunter know you asked and he can get back to you.”</p>

Communication with Parents and Community Members

Communication with parents and other community members should be directed to the special education teacher unless he or she has directed you otherwise. At times, this might be difficult as people often expect that a paraprofessional will communicate with them either at school or in the community.

Below are examples of questions you may be asked and how you might respond:

Question	Possible Response
<p>“How is Marcus doing in Mrs. Garcia’s class?”</p>	<p>“Mr. Jackson has asked me to direct any questions about Marcus’ progress back to him. I know he would be happy to talk to you about how Marcus is doing.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“Can you ask Mr. Jackson about that? He’s asked me direct all parent questions about students back to him. Thanks for understanding. “</p>
<p>“I noticed that there is a boy in Mr. Arnold’s class that flaps his hands and yells all the time. Why does he do that?”</p>	<p>“I’m sorry, but I can’t talk about students outside of school. Thanks for understanding.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“I appreciate your curiosity, but unfortunately I can’t share that information with you.”</p>
<p>“Is Mariana in special ed?”</p>	<p>“That’s not something I can share with you, sorry.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“Information like that is confidential, so I can’t talk with you about it. Thanks for understanding!”</p>
<p>“Why do you have to be at recess with Joshua?”</p>	<p>“Sorry, I can’t discuss that with anyone outside of school.”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“Part of my job is to protect student confidentiality, so I can’t explain that.”</p>

Characteristics of Learners

When working with students with disabilities, it is often helpful to understand basic information about the student's disability. Although every student is different, often students will demonstrate one or more characteristics to varying degrees.

The following definitions for each of the 14 eligibility categories were taken from the Idaho Special Education Manual 2017:

Autism

Definition: An Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disability, generally evident in the early developmental period, significantly affecting verbal or nonverbal communication and social interaction, and adversely affecting educational performance.

- a) Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts, currently or by history:
- b) Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period, but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities, or may be masked by learned strategies in later life.
- c) Other characteristics often associated with autism include, but are not limited to, engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input.
- d) Characteristics vary from mild to severe as well as in the number of symptoms present and are not primarily the result of intellectual disability, developmental delay, or an emotional disturbance.

Intellectual Disability

Definition: Intellectual Disability is defined as significantly sub-average intellectual functioning that exists concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior. These deficits are manifested during the student's developmental period, and adversely affect the student's educational performance.

Deaf-Blindness

Definition: A student with deaf-blindness demonstrates both hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that the student cannot be appropriately educated with special education services designed solely for students with deafness or blindness.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Definition: Deaf or Hard of Hearing means a child with a hearing loss, whether permanent or fluctuating, that impairs the access, comprehension, and/or use of linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Developmental Delay

Definition: The term developmental delay may be used only for students ages three (3) until their tenth (10th) birthday who are experiencing developmental delays as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the following areas:

- a) Cognitive development – includes skills involving perceptual discrimination, memory, reasoning, academic skills, and conceptual development;
- b) Physical development – includes skills involving coordination of both the large and small muscles of the body (i.e., gross, fine, and perceptual motor skills);
- c) Communication development – includes skills involving expressive and receptive communication abilities, both verbal and nonverbal;
- d) Social or emotional development – includes skills involving meaningful social interactions with adults and other children including self-expression and coping skills; or
- e) Adaptive development – includes daily living skills (e.g., eating, dressing, and toileting) as well as skills involving attention and personal responsibility.

Emotional Disturbance

Definition: A student with an emotional disturbance exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time, and to a marked degree, that adversely affects his or her educational performance:

- a) An inability to learn that is not primarily the result of intellectual disability; hearing, vision, or motor impairment, or other health impairment;
- b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
- c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
- d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
- e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems; or
- f) Schizophrenia.

The term *does not* include students who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined they have an emotional disturbance.

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

Definition: A student classified as having Other Health Impairment exhibits limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including heightened alertness to environmental stimuli that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment that is due to chronic or acute health problems. These health problems may include, but are not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, Tourette syndrome, and stroke to such a degree that it adversely affects the student's educational performance.

A student with ADD/ADHD may also be eligible under another category (generally specific learning disability or emotional disturbance) if he or she meets the criteria for that other category and needs special education and related services. All students with a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD are not necessarily eligible to receive special education under the IDEA, just as all students who have one of the other conditions listed under other health impairment are not necessarily eligible, unless it is determined to adversely affect educational performance and require specially designed instruction.

Specific Learning Disability

Definition: Specific Learning Disability (SLD) means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.

Specific Learning Disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Only a school age child may be identified as a student with a specific learning disability.

Multiple Disabilities

Definition: Multiple disabilities are two or more co-existing severe impairments, one of which usually includes an intellectual disability, such as intellectual disability/blindness, intellectual disability/orthopedic, etc. Students with multiple disabilities exhibit impairments that are likely to be life long, significantly interfere with independent functioning, and may necessitate environmental accommodations or adaptations to enable the student to participate in school and society. The term does not include deaf-blindness.

Orthopedic Impairment

Definition: Orthopedic impairment means a severe physical limitation that adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by congenital anomaly (clubfoot, or absence of an appendage), an impairment caused by disease (poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis, etc.), or an impairment from other causes (cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contracture).

Speech or Language Impairment: Language

Definition: A language impairment exists when there is a disorder or delay in the development of comprehension and/or the uses of spoken or written language and/or other symbol systems. The impairment may involve any one or a combination of the following:

- a) The form of language (morphological and syntactic systems);
- b) The content of language (semantic systems); and/or
- c) The function of language in communication (pragmatic systems).

A language disorder does not exist when language differences are due to non-standard English or regional dialect or when the evaluator cannot rule out environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage as primary factors causing the impairment. The evaluation team is encouraged to ask if a hearing screening has been completed. Also note, a student can be considered as having a Language Impairment if the criteria for Deaf or Hard of Hearing have not been met.

Speech or Language Impairment: Speech

Definition: The term speech impairment includes articulation/phonology disorders, voice disorders, or fluency disorders that adversely impact a child's educational performance. The following eligibility criteria and minimum assessment procedures have been established for all three types of speech impairments.

Articulation/Phonology Disorder

Definition: Articulation is the ability to speak distinctly and connectedly. Articulation disorders are incorrect productions of speech sounds including omissions, distortions, substitutions, and/or additions that may interfere with intelligibility. Phonology is the process used in our language that has common elements (sound patterns) that affect different sounds. Phonology disorders are errors involving phonemes, sound patterns, and the rules governing their combinations.

- 1) An articulation/phonology disorder exists when:
 - i. The disorder is exhibited by omissions, distortions, substitutions, or additions;
 - ii. The articulation interferes with communication and calls attention to itself; and

- iii. The disorder adversely affects educational or developmental performance.
- 2) An articulation/phonology disorder does not exist when:
- i. Errors are temporary in nature or are due to temporary conditions such as dental changes;
 - ii. Differences are due to culture, bilingualism or dialect, or from being non-English speaking; or
 - iii. There are delays in developing the ability to articulate only the most difficult blends of sound or consonants within the broad range for the student's age.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Definition: Traumatic brain injury refers to an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in a total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance. The term applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas such as cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, and speech. The term does not apply to congenital or degenerative brain injuries or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Visual Impairment Including Blindness

Definition: Visual impairment refers to an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. Partial sight refers to the ability to use vision as one channel of learning if educational materials are adapted. Blindness refers to the prohibition of vision as a channel of learning, regardless of the adaptation of materials.

Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals

Supervision Responsibilities

Special education teachers have the responsibility of supervising paraprofessionals that work in their program. It is important to know who your direct supervisor is in the event that you have questions or need assistance.

The Idaho Special Education Manual 2017 indicates the following regarding supervision responsibilities:

The certificated/licensed teacher and/or related service provider will generally be responsible for the supervision of all paraprofessionals, assistants, and aides who provide direct services to students with disabilities. All paraprofessionals, assistants, and aides must have a supervision plan developed by a certificated or licensed professional.

Responsibilities of a Paraprofessional

The responsibilities of a paraprofessional can vary between districts, schools, and even between classrooms. The special education teacher, principal, or other staff members will identify the daily responsibilities of paraprofessionals they supervise. In some cases, you might be given a Responsibility Matrix, such as the example in Appendix A, that outlines the responsibilities of the teacher and the paraprofessional.

Once those responsibilities are outlined, it is important that you review them, and ask questions to clarify any information that is unclear. Some examples of questions that you might ask your direct supervisor are:

- Who will provide me with my weekly or daily schedule?
- Will I be working in multiple classrooms or have any duties outside of your classroom?
- How do you prefer that I bring questions or concerns to you?
- Will I be collecting data for the students I work with? What are the procedures?
- What is the procedure if I need to take a day off?
- What staff development will I be expected to participate in?
- What are the district's policies and regulations regarding harassment, teasing, or bullying?
- What is the evaluation procedure for my work?

Examples of Possible Responsibilities:

The following are examples of responsibilities that might be assigned to you as a paraprofessional. This list is not exhaustive but a small fragment of possible responsibilities.

Supervision of Groups of Students	Behavioral Supports	Delivery of Instruction/Therapy/Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assist individual students on arrival and/or departure ● Supervise groups of students during lunch ● Supervise groups of students during recess ● Monitor students during hall passing periods ● Escort groups of students to bathroom, library, gym, etc. ● Accompany students to therapy sessions ● Circulate in classroom to provide behavioral supports where needed ● Enforce class and school rules ● Facilitate appropriate social interactions among students ● Supervise students while on field trips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implements positive behavior management strategies using the same emphasis and techniques as the teacher, including observing and rewarding student behavior. ● Provide reinforcement and support according to IEPs/Individualized Behavior Plans ● Provide physical proximity for students with behavior problems ● Assist students who are self-managing behavior (e.g. provide cues, prompts) ● Help students develop/self-monitor organizational skills ● Provide cues, prompts to students to use impulse/anger control strategies ● Provide cues, prompts to students to employ specific prosocial skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide instruction based on provided lesson plans ● Read/repeat tests or directions to students ● Read with students ● Support classroom teacher in providing accommodations as outlined in the IEP ● Help students work on individual projects ● Support students' participation in classroom activities (e.g. using the computer, gathering materials, cooperative groups) ● Re-teach/reinforce instructional concepts introduced by teachers to small groups or individual students ● Provide prompts during instruction as outlined by the teacher to promote student independence. ● Provide instruction based on provided lesson plans

Data Collection/Reporting	Activity Preparation/Follow-up	Health/Personal Related Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Observe and record: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student progress in academic areas ● Individual student behaviors ● Student health needs ● Student food/liquid intake ● Student bathroom use/needs ● Student use of communication skills, adaptive equipment or devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create, prepare and organize supplies and materials ● Prepare classroom displays ● Help prepare and clean up snacks ● Help students clean up after activities ● Collect completed work from students/return papers to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow a personal care plan ● Assist students using the restroom ● Transfer, turn, position, lift students ● Assist student to use wheelchair, stander, other mobility devices ● Provide support with assistive technology

Classroom Considerations

Classroom Expectations and Routines

As a paraprofessional, it will be important for you to understand and support schoolwide and/or classroom expectations, as well as the classroom routines for each classroom or school setting that you work in. School or classroom expectations identify behaviors that make the school or classroom a good place for students to learn. Classroom routines are established ways for students to complete a task such as sharpening pencils, requesting help, or turning in assignments.

When working with students, all staff should be positive models of the expectations, as well as provide students with praise for following the expectations. If a student is struggling to follow an expectation, it is important to provide feedback to the student to help them correct their behavior. This might include reminding them of the expectation, explaining how they need to change their current behavior to meet the expectation, or having them practice the correct way to demonstrate the expectation. Check with your direct supervisor to identify what approach he or she prefers that you take with students.

Examples of questions that you might ask your direct supervisor are:

- What are the school and classroom expectations?
- What is my role in supporting or teaching the classroom expectations?
- Are there classroom routines that I need to be aware of, and how are those routines taught to students?

- Do any of the students I work with have Behavior Intervention Plans? If so, how do I implement those?

Classroom Management

Whether you are providing instruction for small groups of students or working with a student one-on-one, classroom management will be part of your role. In order to maximize learning time and reduce disruptions to the classroom, it is important to:

- Review classroom expectations regularly.
- Provide positive reinforcement to students who are following the expectations. (For example, “I really appreciate that you are being a good listener. Your eyes are on me, and I can tell that you heard the directions because you are ready to get started!”)
- Communicate information and directions clearly.
- Ensure that instructional time is fully utilized and that there is little time wasted on organizing materials or transitions.
- Maximize student engagement to reduce opportunities for off task behaviors.

Instruction

As a paraprofessional you may be providing instruction to students under the direction of the special education teacher. This could be academic instruction, such as reading or math, behavioral instruction, or even social skills instruction. You might also be preparing instructional materials for lessons. There are a wide variety of instructional strategies and techniques that are effective with students with disabilities. The special education teacher will select the instructional method to be used.

Before teaching a lesson, it is helpful to review the lesson and ask yourself questions such as:

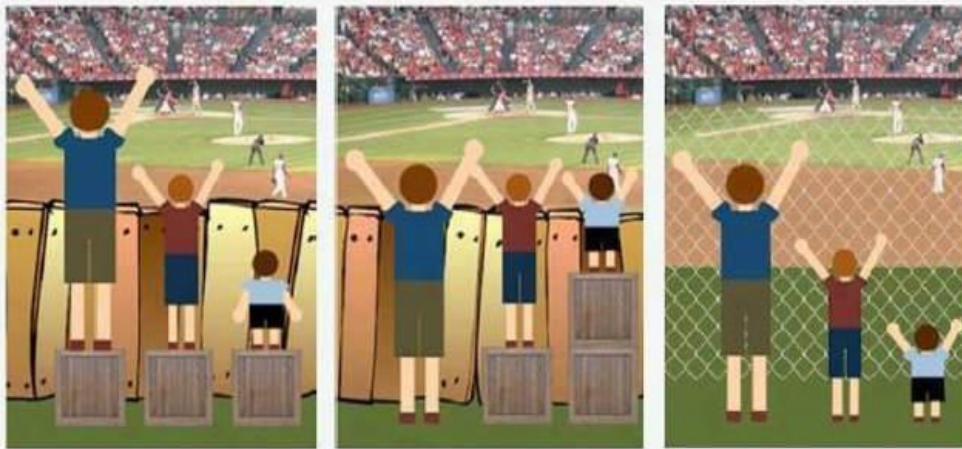
- Do I know what the goal of the lesson is?
- Are the directions clear for myself and for the students?
- Do I have the materials I need ready?
- Do I know how to implement the lesson as outlined? If not, could I ask the teacher to demonstrate for me?
- Do I know what prompts I might need to use?
- Do I understand how the students will show that they have learned the material?
- Do I know what to do if the students aren’t getting it?
- Do I know what data or work samples I need to collect?

Student Accommodations

Understanding Accommodations

Accommodations are tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for students with disabilities. “Access” is the opportunity and ability for an individual to participate in the instruction, discussions, activities, products, and assessment provided to all students within a public school. Accommodations are provided to “level the playing field.” Without accommodations, students with disabilities may not be able to access grade-level instruction or participate fully on assessments. They are intended to offset the effects of the disability and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Accommodations are intended to reduce, or even eliminate, the effects of a student’s disability. They do not, however, reduce learning expectations and should not give a false picture of what a student knows and can do.

EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.

In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

Source: <https://region7eyler.weebly.com/news/equality-vs-equity-in-learning-udl>

Implementing Accommodations

When working with students, you might be asked to implement or support student accommodations in a special or general education setting. The special education teacher will indicate what the student’s IEP accommodations are and how they should be implemented. It is important to remember that when implementing accommodations, they must be followed as

outlined. This helps to ensure that the student is getting equitable educational support to “level the playing field,” allows them to show what they are able to do, and work toward student independence.

If you are unsure of what an accommodation means, or if a teacher you are working with asks you to change the accommodation, be sure to talk to your direct supervisor about it.

Ethical Principles and Standards

For the Paraprofessional

All Paraeducators have a critical responsibility to *maintain high standards of ethical conduct*. Ethical Principles and Standards are expectations of professional conduct established in schools. Because they spend considerable time working directly with students, paraeducators are often critical role models for children in schools. If you are unsure what to do, talk to your supervising teacher.

Ethical Principle 1: Consider all aspects of a student’s education confidential.

We must only discuss a student’s educational program, progress, limitations, or family situation with the supervising teacher and other authorized district personnel – never to others.

- We should not release any documents about a student without permission of the classroom teacher or without prior written permission from the parent or legal guardian.
- We must not discuss one student’s confidential matters *in the presence of other students*.
- We must not discuss confidential matters *outside* the school. Parents, guardians, and students have the right to expect that information about them will not be communicated to any person outside the educational setting.

Ethical Principle 2: Refer important information from parents, guardians, students, and others that might affect the welfare of a student to the classroom teacher. We must immediately report to the teacher events or actions that might be harmful to a student.

- If events or actions present a *direct danger to the student*, immediately report them. This includes information about suicide threats, fights between individuals or gangs, or illegal drugs.
- If we observe signs of *possible physical abuse, physical neglect, or sexual abuse*, immediately report them. Every person who provides services to children or youth is required by federal law to report suspected abuse or neglect.

According to Houk and McKenzie (1988), educators should be watchful for:

1. Signs of physical abuse:

- Bruises or welts (sometimes in regular patterns on the face, neck, head, back, thighs, buttocks, or extremities); cigar or cigarette burns (sometimes in inconspicuous places,

such as the soles of feet or buttocks); fractures (single or multiple broken bones, sometimes in various stages of healing); lacerations or abrasions; periods of several days without school attendance;

- Behaviors such as unhappiness, anger, destructiveness, withdrawal or isolation from others, abusive behavior toward self or others, constantly seeking attention, or showing no concern about being separated from parents or other care givers.

2. Signs of physical neglect:

- Malnutrition, i.e., undernourishment (severe under-eating); poor hygiene; inadequate clothing for cold weather; injuries that have gone without treatment; poor school attendance;
- Behaviors such as fatigue (no energy), use of drugs/alcohol, stealing food or clothing, or reports by the student of too much child care or other responsibilities at home.

3. Signs of sexual abuse:

- Difficulty walking or sitting; bruises, abrasions, or bleeding in the genital or anal area; swelling of the genital area; complaints of genital pain; recurrent urinary tract infections; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing;
- Behaviors such as withdrawal, daydreaming, poor self-esteem, fear of other persons (particularly adults), expressions of shame or guilt, sudden decreases in school performance, or sudden changes toward more immature behavior.

Ethical Principle 3: Carry out only those activities (such as delivery of instruction, supervision, or behavior intervention) for which you are qualified and trained. If you are not trained or qualified you should avoid these activities. It is better to say “I haven’t been trained” or “I’m not qualified to do that” than to try something and face the consequences.

Ethical Principle 4: Use behavioral intervention procedures only in ways that are consistent with the classroom teacher’s expectations and the district’s policies. Behavioral intervention procedures are ways to change behavior. All of these procedures can be misused. Misuse of some procedures, like punishment, may be interpreted as physical abuse or neglect.

Ethical Principle 5: Take responsible action to ensure the welfare and educational development of students are first priority. We must avoid any activity that might be interpreted as not in the best interests of our students.

Ethical Principle 7: Treat each student fairly to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn. Avoid favoritism or discrimination. The purpose of our job is to enable all students to achieve to their maximum capability.

Ethical Principle 8: Respect the dignity, individuality, and privacy of all students. They will become productive citizens of an integrated community if we treat them with the respect that we would expect for ourselves.

These eight ethical principals must be followed at ALL TIMES

Collaboration Considerations

As a paraprofessional, you are an important part of the classroom team. You may be asked to collaborate with general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, speech-language pathologist, occupational or physical therapists, the school nurse or other staff members in your building. It is important to build a good relationship with the other members of the team to benefit students and create a positive working environment. In order to maximize student learning, collaborative teams must be able to communicate effectively to identify solutions. Good communication involves back-and-forth conversation that is focused on students' needs, being respectful of others' ideas and perspectives, and being a good listener.

When working collaboratively, some points to consider as a paraprofessional are:

- Presume positive intentions.
- Every interaction is an opportunity.
- Share information and solicit feedback, but remember that the teacher has the responsibility to ensure that the IEP is implemented as written.
- Demonstrate gratitude when appropriate.
- Good relationships can frame conflicts as opportunities.

In any collaborative situation, listening to understand is a critical skill. In the book *Better Conversations* (2016), author Jim Knight identifies 4 strategies to keep in mind to be a great listener:

1. Commit to really listening, not just listening to respond.
2. Be the listener, not the speaker.
3. Pause and think before you speak.
4. Don't interrupt.

Health and Safety

Paraprofessionals in school settings have a high level of physical contact with many of the students with which they work. This may include assisting students with eating, toileting, personal hygiene, lifting, using therapeutic equipment, pushing a wheelchair or assisting with a specific health related need. It is very important that you understand how to carry out these job expectations while keeping yourself and the students that you work with safe. Any part of your job that requires the use of equipment, a specific procedure or physical contact with a student should be clearly defined and explained to you by a supervisory staff.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are a series of actions and activities that you will use across the school day to keep yourself safe from the risk of infectious diseases or from spreading infectious diseases to others. It is not possible to know who may be a carrier of an infectious disease just by being acquainted with the students or staff in your school. Across the school day you will be expected to:

- Wash your hands as often as possible, preferable between working with students, just as you might expect a doctor or nurse to do between patients. Use soap and hot running water. Make sure that you wash your hands after handling diapers, Kleenex, equipment that students have used, after handling soiled clothing, and before and after handling food. Do this even if you wore protective gloves during these activities.
- Use disposable gloves. Use the gloves only once. Use the gloves for any activity that may include contact with bodily fluids of any kind. Remember, just because you know a student well and are very comfortable with them does not mean that you could not contract something from them or pass on an infection that you may be carrying. Wear disposable gloves when you are physically assisting a student with eating or drinking. If a student has a physical impairment that requires assistance with eating, you may come into contact with their saliva. Wear gloves when assisting them. If you do not know where gloves are kept ask. If you are allergic to latex you will need to discuss this with the school nurse or your supervising teacher and non-latex gloves will be supplied.
- If a room surface has blood or bodily wastes on it, it will need to be cleaned immediately. Your supervising teacher, the school nurse or the school custodial service will know where approved disinfectants are kept. Each school will have a specific procedure for cleaning surfaces with these sorts of contaminants on them.

Using universal precautions will greatly increase your personal safety and will protect you from risk of infection. It also increases the likelihood of better health and the safety for those around you.

Assisting Students with Meals

Many students with multiple impairments require assistance with eating. This may include completely feeding a student, preparing food and giving minimal physical prompts, or visually monitoring students during mealtime. When assisting a student by feeding them, first review the specific mealtime process with your supervising teacher. Keep the following procedural guidelines in mind.

- Use disposable gloves
- Student should be seated as upright as possible
- Sit at eye level with the student.
- Talk to/with the student while you are feeding him/her. Mealtimes are typically social times for most people. Be conversant and pleasant and do not ignore the student you are assisting while

talking to others around you. The student you are assisting should be the center of your attention.

- Tell the student when you are about to give them a bite of food and what the food item is.
- Never feed a student using a plastic utensil. Always use a metal spoon.
- 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 hotdogs should be cut lengthwise so as to avoid cylinder shapes that easily cause choking.
- Make sure food has been swallowed before delivering the next bite.
- Place food on center of tongue, press down gently and remove spoon with upward movement that will encourage student to clear the spoon with their upper lip.
- Give only 1 or 2 swallows of fluid at a time.
- Review the Heimlich maneuver. If needed ask about eh maneuver specific to the size of student that you will be feeding.
- Ask what procedures are used for a student who uses a wheelchair who might be choking.

Seizures

Seizures are not uncommon events in the school setting. Typically, seizures are controlled with medication. There are occasions when this is not the case. Some seizures are mild and you may not notice that the student has had one. If the student should have a more involved episode of seizure activity follow this list of procedural guidelines:

- Don't panic, be calm and be in control of the situation.
- Send another person for help immediately
- Ask for your immediate supervisor
- Not the time of the onset of the seizure. It is important to be able to identify the length of the seizure in order to make prompt and informed decisions regarding possible needed medical attention.
- If the student is not already lying down, ease him/her to the floor. You may need assistance to do this. Ask for help from those around you if you cannot do this yourself. Lay the student on their side, protecting their head from contact with the floor. If you do not have a coat or sweater or some other soft object to place under the student's head, use your hand until something else can be managed.
- Position the student's head so as to facilitate drainage of any oral secretions.
- Clear the immediate area of any objects that could cause injury if they came into physical contact with the student during the seizure.
- Do not attempt to contain the seizure movements of the student.
- Do not attempt to place anything in the mouth of the student.
- Loosen any tight or restrictive clothing

- If the student is in a wheelchair they should remain there unless they are injuring themselves on the chair. Loosen foot restraints and remove any restraints or objects that would interfere with seizure related arm and leg or head movements.

Remember: You cannot control or stop a seizure. It will run its course. Your school nurse will make any further decisions regarding possible needed medical assistance. Assisting someone having a seizure can be a frightening experience and you may need to discuss the episode with your supervising teacher. Once again, if you have questions, ask.

Wheelchair Safety

Placing students in a wheelchair can be a complicated procedure and should be discussed with a supervising teacher or occupational therapist before attempting to do so. The following guidelines should be helpful for most students who use a wheelchair:

- Always set wheelchair breaks before placing a student in or removing from a wheelchair.
- Typically, students should be placed in a wheelchair with their buttocks as far back in the seat as possible, so as to encourage upright posture.
- Fasten hip or seat belts first

Lifting

If you are working with a student who is physically disabled and needs to be lifted in and out of a wheelchair or equipment you should ask your supervising teacher/Occupational Therapist about the procedure before attempting it. Here are some general rules or guidelines that you should follow to help keep you injury free:

- If the student appears to be over 40 pounds or if you feel that you may have difficulty lifting a student who weighs less than 40 pounds you should request assistance with the lift.
- When lifting a larger student, over 40 pounds, always use a 2-person lift procedure, this should be demonstrated and reviewed by a supervisory staff member.
- When lifting, always bend at your knees and lift with your legs, not your back.
- Keep your legs shoulder-width apart to provide you with better balance and stability.
- When lifting smaller students support them with an arm around their back and under their mid-thighs.
- Never lift a student by their arms, this could result in dislocated joints. Hold the student's body close to yours while carrying them.

Toileting

Many students with disabilities require assistance using the restroom. This assistance may include:

Changing diapers

Assisting student to and from the toilet

Physically assisting a student with pulling pants up or down before and after using the toilet

Visually checking to make sure a student has successfully used the restroom or just reminding a student that it is time to use the restroom.

While assisting with any of the listed procedures that require physical contact you should wear disposable gloves. If the student requires a diaper change you should request demonstration and supervision the first time. A supervisory staff member will review any specific diapering or toileting procedures with you. The larger the student is, the more complicated and sometimes difficult the procedures may be. Remember, the dignity of the student must be regarded and respected at all times. Even though some regard this aspect of the Paraprofessional job duty as difficult and unpleasant it still needs to remain a dignified, personal process for the student.

Medications

State and Federal laws prohibit the delivery of medication to students by an adult in the school unless the adult has had specific training under the supervision of the nurse and a special education teacher. Remember, you cannot deliver any kind of medication to a student unless you have had training that is specific to that student. Training for one student does not qualify you to deliver medication to another student. It is possible that your job might include this responsibility and it should be regarded seriously.

Appendix

EXAMPLE- Responsibility Matrix for Paraprofessionals and Teachers

	Paraprofessional	Teacher
Lesson Plans	Assists in the implementation of lesson plans. May include instruction, material preparations, teacher support, etc.	Creates and implements daily lesson plans. Supervises paraprofessionals in implementation of lesson plans.
Classroom Management Plans	Assists in implementing student behavior and classroom management plans.	Creates and implements student behavior and classroom management plans. Supervises paraprofessionals in implementation of management plans.
IEP	Attends IEP meetings when invited. Provides information regarding a student's progress. Supports the delivery of services as assigned.	Develops and may conduct IEP meetings, implements and monitors IEP services.
File Maintenance	When part of the job description, accesses or maintains files after being trained. Keeps file information confidential.	Maintains student files and records. Keeps file information confidential.
Communication with Parents	When assigned, may contact parents to obtain or present information. Should not make recommendations or express personal opinions without direct assignment by the teacher.	Communicates with parents about student progress. Reviews all communication sent home to parents.
Assessments	When trained, administers assessments as assigned by the teacher.	Determines and administers appropriate assessments. Summarizes results and takes appropriate action.
Progress Monitoring	Collects and records data as assigned by the teacher.	Reviews and monitors the academic and behavioral progress of all students and makes data-based decisions. Trains paraprofessionals in data collection procedures.
Confidentiality	Discusses student issues only with the teacher or others under direction of teacher.	Discusses student issues only with authorized individuals. Reviews the requirement of maintaining confidentiality with paraprofessionals, volunteers, and peer tutors.
Conflict Resolution	Learns and follows the "Chain of Command" appropriately. Takes responsibility for resolving conflicts constructively.	Effectively communicates expectations. Follows the "Chain of Command" appropriately. Resolves conflicts using appropriate problem-solving strategies.

Source: Adapted from Utah Paraeducator Handbook, www.utahparas.org

CANYON-OWYHEE SCHOOL SERVICE AGENCY
Job Description

TITLE: Special Education Para-Professional

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

To be determined by the calendar year.

Regular attendance is an essential function of this job.

- If you are chosen for this position your employment with the District would be "at will". Employment at Will means that the employee or the District may terminate the employment relationship with or without cause, and with or without notice, at any time.
- As per Idaho Code 65-5-1/65-503: "Eligible veterans are provided advantages in public employment in Idaho..."

IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR: Special Education Teacher & Director of Special Education

JOB SUMMARY:

The primary function of an employee in this class is to provide assistance to special education teachers in the Resource Room (RR), Extended Resource Room (ERR), Therapeutic Learning Classroom (TLC), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program or Special Day Classroom, assisting in the implementation of students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs). The Paraprofessional works with students with a variety of mild to severe physical, emotional, and learning disabilities and may work with an individual student or groups of students, both in a separate classroom facility or facilitating inclusion into a regular classroom. The position is directly supervised by the assigned COSSA Special Education Teacher with overall supervision by the COSSA Director of Special Education. The primary duties of the position are performed in a classroom environment and may include exposure to body fluids and some personal injury risk from student behaviors. Days and hours shall be assigned by the Special Education Director and District Office. Individual classroom hours shall be assigned by the Special Education Teacher and may vary due to staffing needs.

QUALIFICATIONS

- High school diploma or GED equivalent required; college or other advanced education or training is preferred; and
- Classroom or other instructional experience is preferred; and
- Experience with special needs children is preferred; or
- Any equivalent combination of experience and training providing knowledge and abilities to perform the work.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES

- Provides assistance to special education teachers in the special education program;
- Assists teachers in implementing students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs);
- Assists teachers by preparing lesson plans and preparing, modifying, and adapting materials and presentations used in the classroom;
- Assists teachers in administering diagnostic, skills, and level testing;
- Assists students with classroom and homework assignments, tutoring, or other supplemental instruction;
- Assists students with socialization, personal hygiene, medications and physical therapy, nutritional, and related personal tasks as needed;
- Assists students individually and/or in a group situation, both in a separate classroom learning facility or by facilitating inclusion into regular classrooms;
- Assists regular classroom teachers by preparing, modifying, and adapting classroom presentations and materials to assigned students;
- Assists teachers with classroom activities, classroom management, lesson plans, grading papers, clerical and record-keeping duties, creating and updating reports and files, and other documentation, as directed;
- Performs substitute teacher duties in the absence of the teacher;
- Assists teachers with clerical duties including, but not limited to, copying, inputting records and data into a computer, faxing, text and document preparation, and related duties;



- Assists in maintaining the classroom in a clean, neat, and orderly status, prepares bulletin boards and displays, and maintains classroom supply levels;
- Assists with student supervision on field trips and related extracurricular activities;
- Performs school grounds, bus, noon, and other monitoring and safety duties, as assigned
- Participates in appropriate training, workshop, and in-service programs;
- Performs other related duties as assigned;
- Performs all work duties and activities in accordance with COSSA & District policies, procedures and safety practices

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Knowledge of:

- Basic educational procedures and objectives, including classroom instruction and presentation, preparation of teaching materials and aids, behavior management and modification, testing and grading, tutoring, and student-teacher relations and interactions;
- Basic special education methods and procedures for dealing with students with mild to severe physical, emotional, and/or learning disabilities;
- Operation of classroom instructional equipment;
- Operation of standard office equipment;
- Operation of a personal computer and job-related software.

Ability to:

- Follow written and oral instructions and observe District policies and procedures;
- Interpret and modify classroom instructions, materials, and presentations to the appropriate learning level of the assigned student;
- Prepare and provide basic classroom services for special needs students, including but not limited to, instruction, tutoring, student evaluation, lesson plans, curriculum implementation, materials preparation, and classroom management;
- Maintain a calm personal demeanor and remain focused in situations of high stress;
- Perform multiple tasks simultaneously, including handling interruptions, and return to and complete tasks in a timely manner;
- Prepare and maintain required records, files, reports, logs, statistics, and documentation;
- Operate classroom instructional equipment;
- Perform basic office tasks including keyboarding, copying, and filing;
- Perform time management and scheduling functions, meet deadlines, and set task priorities;
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with students, teachers and staff members, and other District personnel;
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing;
- Maintain student, school, and parental confidentiality;
- Demonstrate integrity, ingenuity and inventiveness in the performance of assigned tasks.

ESSENTIAL PHYSICAL ABILITIES

- Sufficient clarity of speech and hearing, with or without reasonable accommodation, which permits the employee to discern verbal instructions, communicate effectively in person, and to hear sounds within the normal range of conversation;
- Sufficient visual acuity, with or without reasonable accommodation, which permits the employee to comprehend written work instructions and comprehend, prepare, and review a variety of written and text documents and materials;
- Sufficient manual dexterity, with or without reasonable accommodation, which permits the employee to physically interact with secondary-level students with a variety of disabilities and operate classroom instruction equipment and office equipment, including a personal computer;

- Sufficient personal mobility, agility, strength, and reflexes, with or without reasonable accommodation, which permits the employee to bend, stoop, kneel, stand, walk, run or sit for long periods of time, lift a minimum of 40 pounds, and physically interact with and control students, including applying prescribed restraint techniques, in a special education classroom environment.

EVALUATION

Yearly by Supervisor and/or Director of Special Education

I have received a copy of my job description and certify that I am able and willing to meet the demands of the position.

Para-Professional Signature

Date



Verification Form

I, _____ verify that I
have read the COSSA Paraprofessional Handbook.

Name

Date

