

Reviewed and revised August 2015

Strategies for Meeting Title and Special Education Paraprofessional Requirements

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2007 restates the original requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) applies requirements to certain paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities.

Specifically, special education paraprofessionals working in Title I school-wide programs must meet the requirements set forth in NCLB.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IDEA (1997; 2007) states that paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulation, or written policy, may assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities. In response to IDEA legislation, it is important to acknowledge the following, which was enacted in Minnesota rule in 1998. These requirements directly relate to Minnesota paraprofessionals working in special education.

Minnesota Statutes 125A.08(b) – (b)

2015 Minnesota Session Laws changed the training requirements for paraprofessionals who ~~work with~~ provide direct support to students with disabilities. The following change will appear in Minnesota Statute 125A.08 and is effective immediately.

(c) For all paraprofessionals employed to work in programs ~~for~~ whose role in part is to provide direct support to students with disabilities, the school board in each district shall ensure that:

(1) before or ~~immediately upon~~ beginning at the time of employment, each paraprofessional ~~develops~~ must develop sufficient knowledge and skills in emergency procedures, building orientation, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, vulnerability, and reportability, among other things, to begin meeting the needs, especially disability-specific and behavioral needs, of the students with whom the paraprofessional works;

(2) annual training opportunities are ~~available~~ required to enable the paraprofessional to continue to further develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the paraprofessional works, including understanding disabilities, the unique and individual needs of each student

according to the student's disability and how the disability affects the student's education and behavior, following lesson plans, and implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities; and

(3) a districtwide process obligates each paraprofessional to work under the ongoing direction of a licensed teacher and, where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.

No Child Left Behind Act

NCLB (2001) provides three options for paraprofessionals who assist with instruction to meet the requirements as stated here:

Option A: Two years of study at an institution of higher education; Minnesota's standard: A minimum of 60 semester credits or the amount required to complete two years of full time enrollment as determined by the institution attended; February 14, 2005, OR

Option B: An Associate's (or higher) degree; Minnesota's standard: An AA, AS, AAS (or higher) degree; OR

Option C: A demonstration, through a formal state or local academic assessment: a. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and math; or b. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness as appropriate.

Minnesota's standard (for C) can be met one of three ways:

1. A passing score on an assessment from the state approved list*; OR
2. demonstrating all Minnesota paraprofessional core competencies (1-8) by local district validation of a portfolio through: transferable work experience, college courses, workshops and conferences, Para eLink and demonstration of skill using Para eLink or a similar curriculum that focuses on recent training addressed in Competency 9 of Reading, Math and Writing, OR
3. A state-approved local assessment.** (criteria listed below)

*The ParaPro test has been approved for statewide use. The cut score for ParaPro is 460.

**Criteria for local assessments: A local assessment must satisfy the following criteria, and be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education for approval: Reliable, valid, accessible, objective, comparable to two years of higher education, and able to measure knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and math (or reading, writing and math readiness) in the language of instruction. Local education agencies interested in this option may choose to explore assessments, which meet local needs. Requests for approval of a local assessment should be sent to the Commissioner.