

No Child Left Behind Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

PARAPROFESSIONALS

Q: Who is a paraprofessional?

A: The law does not define a paraprofessional. However, the act does specify the duties of paraprofessionals. These duties may include:

- Providing one-on-one tutoring for students if tutoring is provided at a time when the student did not have access to a teacher;
- Assisting with classroom management;
- Conducting parental involvement activities;
- Providing support in library or media centers;
- Acting as a translator; or
- Providing instructional services to a student.

In the Anchorage School District, classroom aides, bilingual tutors, and Title I teacher assistants perform most of these duties.

Q: How are paraprofessionals impacted by the legislation?

A: New criteria for employment have been implemented for paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals in a local school district receiving money from Title I federal programs will have to meet higher standards. These standards include completion of two years of study at an institution of higher learning, or an associate's degree; or meeting a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal assessment, knowledge of and ability to assist in reading, writing and mathematics instruction. New to district paraprofessionals (those hired after 1/8/02) must meet these criteria prior to employment. Paraprofessionals hired before 1/8/02 will have four years to complete the requirements.

Also, all paraprofessionals currently working in schools supported by Title I funds must have a secondary high school diploma or GED. Instruction must be provided under the direct supervision of a certificated teacher.

Q: How can a person know if they are employed in a Title I school?

A: The individual should contact the school principal or federal program manager in the central office.

Q: Are paraprofessionals employed in non-Title I schools affected by the law?

A: The requirements for two years of higher education, or an associate's degree, or successful completion of a formal assessment is not a requirement for paraprofessionals in non-Title I schools under the No Child Left Behind Act. However, each local educational agency (LEA) that receives Title I funds must ensure that all paraprofessionals have a secondary high school diploma or its

equivalent. Moreover, a paraprofessional must work under the direct supervision of a teacher who meets the definition of a highly qualified teacher.

Q: Are there any exceptions to the employment criteria for paraprofessionals?

A: Yes. The requirement for two years of study, or an associate's degree, or completion of a formal assessment applies to paraprofessionals involved with assisting students in an instructional capacity. Paraprofessionals whose primary task is to act as a translator or whose duties consist solely of conducting parental involvement activities are excluded from the education or assessment requirements.

Q: What is meant as rigorous assessment for paraprofessionals?

A: The assessment is being developed by the State and must assess one's knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics.

Q: What is the district doing to provide training/education opportunities for paraprofessionals?

A: The district has formed a committee that is addressing training/education requirements. A percent of the Title 1 funds have been set aside for this purpose.

Q: Can a paraprofessional substitute years of experience or staff development activities in lieu of education or degree requirements?

A: The state is developing a test to assess knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics. This is in line with federal mandates.

Q: Can a local school system require that the same qualifications for employment be extended to all paraprofessionals in the district?

A: This can only occur through the collective bargaining process.

Q: Will additional funding be available to assist paraprofessionals in meeting the requirements for employment?

A: Additional funding will be made available through Title I. The law requires Title I programs to set aside funds for training.

Q: What happens if someone was hired after January 8, 2002, without meeting the requirements for employment?

A: The district must demonstrate that it is actively providing assistance to any paraprofessionals hired after 1/8/02 so they can earn "highly qualified" status.

Q: Can a paraprofessional employed after January 8, 2002 be hired with the understanding that they will meet the requirements before the start of the next year?

A: No. After Jan. 8, 2002, paraprofessionals applying for positions in schools impacted by this law must meet the employment eligibility criteria prior to being employed.