

Appropriate Roles and Responsibilities of Title I Paraprofessionals

1. Will the new law change the kind of work that paraprofessionals do?

A: It is possible that the work of paraprofessionals will change, but probably only for the better. The law lays out very specific criteria for the type of work that can be assigned to paraprofessionals:

- Provide one-on-one tutoring for eligible students, if the tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher;
- Assist with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials;
- Provide assistance in a computer laboratory;
- Conduct parental involvement activities;
- Provide support in a library or media center;
- Act as a translator;
- Provide instructional services to students under the direct supervision of a teacher.

2. Has any other aspect of a paraprofessional's work assignment changed with the new law? Do paraprofessionals still have to work under the direction of a teacher?

A: The law mandates that a paraprofessional cannot provide instructional services unless he/she is working under the direct supervision of a teacher. The federal government's regulation is that it means under the direction of a teacher where: the teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carried out; the teacher evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working; and the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity to the teacher..

3. Does this mean that paraprofessionals won't be asked to take on other responsibilities in the school?

A: No, the law also allows for paraprofessionals working in programs funded by Title I to be assigned limited duties that do not specifically support participating children--as long as the amount of time spent on these duties is the same proportion of total work time as similar personnel at the same school.

For example: Two paraprofessionals work in the same school. One paraprofessional is funded by Title I, the other by the district. If the district-funded paraprofessional spends one hour of a six-hour day monitoring the lunchroom; then it is permissible for the Title I-funded paraprofessional to perform similar work for a similar period of time. It will be up to paraprofessionals and their union to monitor compliance with this provision.

In addition, the law requires that school districts make sure that school principals attest that their school is in compliance with the regulations controlling assignment of paraprofessionals. Copies of these attestations must be available both at the school and at the central office. Regulations that will be developed by the U.S. Department of Education may address this process more specifically, or it may be left to the discretion of every state educational agency, district, and school to develop a process to document compliance.

Professional Development and Career Advancement for Paraprofessionals

1. Will paraprofessionals be included in professional development opportunities designed to improve student achievement in Title I?

A: There are a number of provisions for professional development for paraprofessionals. With regard to targeted assistance schools, the law says that professional development for paraprofessionals, teachers, and others must be included as a program component.

Local educational agencies also must use not less than 5 percent of Title I funds (and not more than 10 percent of funds) to provide professional development to assist paraprofessionals and teachers in meeting the education standards. (See the *Q&A on Paraprofessionals and Education/Employment Standards* for more information.) These funds can be combined with funds from other programs to provide professional development.

2. Is there any other area of the law that addresses the professional development needs of paraprofessionals?

A: In Title II, the law states that local educational agencies may use funds to provide professional development for paraprofessionals to improve their knowledge concerning effective instructional practices while at the same time ensuring that instructional services by paraprofessionals are provided under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Title II also provides for grants to partnerships to provide high-quality professional development to teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals. Grants can go to state agencies, high-need districts, consortiums of states or local agencies, for-profit or nonprofit organizations in partnership with a state or local agency, an institution of higher education in partnership with a state or local agency.

3. Can funds be used to train paraprofessionals to become teachers?

A: Yes. The law states, several times, that funds can be used to develop programs to recruit "highly qualified paraprofessionals" into alternative routes to teacher certification. "Highly qualified paraprofessionals" are defined as paraprofessionals who have at least two years of experience in the classroom and at least two years of postsecondary education or demonstrated competence in a field or academic subject for which there is a significant shortage of qualified teachers.

Questions and Answers for
Paraprofessionals
about the
No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

For additional information on
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Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel