



GOISD Center-Based Programs

Paraprofessional Handbook

2025-2026

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Welcome Paraprofessionals


Welcome to the Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District (GOISD). We are excited to have you on our team and value your essential role in supporting student growth and success in our center-based programs. As a paraprofessional, collaboration with teachers and staff is vital to delivering a high-quality, inclusive educational experience that fosters academic achievement, positive behavior, social development, and student independence.

This handbook is designed to provide helpful information for both new and returning paraprofessionals. It serves as a general guide and reference throughout the school year. If you have questions not addressed on these pages, please contact the case manager, supervisor, or administrative team member. We are committed to supporting you and ensuring your work experience is positive and rewarding.

Please note that this handbook does not constitute a contract of employment and does not guarantee continued employment. GOISD reserves the right to revise or update its contents at any time. If there is a conflict between this handbook and District policies, Board bylaws, or collective bargaining agreements, those formal documents will take precedence. All employees must know and adhere to the guidelines and expectations outlined in official District documents. Other employment policies and procedures are found in the Support Staff Handbook.

Thank you for your dedication to our students. I wish you a successful and fulfilling 2025–2026 school year.

Heidi Lauzon



Director of Special Education
Gogebic-Ontonagon Intermediate School District

Special Education Mission Statement:

The GOISD is committed to delivering a high-quality educational experience for every student. We emphasize academic achievement, behavioral development, and social skill acquisition in a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment. Our goal is to foster independence, dignity, and individualized success.

Paraprofessional Designations

Paraprofessionals are responsible for providing personal care services to students with IEPs. These services are Medicaid-billable and require documentation and specific training. The case managers supervise daily duties, and the special education administrator provides oversight.

General Information:

Work Hours

- **Standard School Day:** 7:30 AM – 3:00 PM
- Two 15-minute breaks per day

Transportation Duties & Stipends

Paraprofessionals assigned to transportation duties are eligible for the following stipends, which are provided in addition to their regular hourly rate.

- Paraprofessionals performing bus supervision duties will receive a \$10 stipend for the before-school bus run and an additional \$10 stipend for the after-school bus run.
- Paraprofessionals assigned to van runs will receive a daily stipend for driving both before- and after-school routes: \$25 for the Gogebic County run and \$30 for the Ontonagon County run.

These stipends acknowledge the added responsibilities involved in student supervision and safe transportation. Typical start time for morning bus or van runs is 6:30 AM, while afternoon runs generally conclude around 3:30 PM.

Daily Schedule

Case Managers or the Principal will provide individualized schedules for paraprofessionals. These may change due to new student enrollments, staff absences, or student crises. Flexibility is essential and greatly appreciated.

Recess and Lunch Duties

The Case Manager or Principal determines recess and lunch assignments. During these times:

- Paraprofessionals should provide necessary personal care to their assigned student(s).
- Actively monitor the room and circulate to ensure student safety.
- Staff take turns using student recess and lunch periods to take their meal breaks while ensuring students remain appropriately supervised.

District Email

Check your district email **daily**. Important information is communicated through email, including:

- Time-sensitive **Medicaid “Moment in Time”** surveys
- Administrative announcements and updates

Professional Development (In-Services)

Refer to the PD schedule for annual in-service dates and details.

Time Worked Outside Regular Hours

All extra time worked **must be pre-approved** by administration, except in emergencies.

In emergencies, notify administration as soon as possible and ensure your timesheet reflects the additional time for approval.

Absence Procedures

Follow the absence reporting procedures outlined in the Non-Certified Staff Handbook.

Additionally, email your Case Manager and Administrator **as soon as possible** if you anticipate an absence.

Paraprofessional Praxis Exam & Crisis Intervention Training

- You must pass and maintain **current crisis intervention certification** (including or excluding the physical intervention component as required).
- Completion of the **Paraprofessional Praxis Exam** is also required.

Phones and Personal Business

Use of personal devices should follow the exact expectations set for students.

Limit personal calls or tasks to your designated break times unless there is an emergency.

Supervision Structure

You report to two key roles:

- **Supervising Teacher(s)**: The teacher(s) in charge of the classroom(s) to which you are supporting a student
- **Case Manager**: The special educator responsible for managing the implementation of student IEPs

Paraprofessional/Teacher Expectations:

Classroom teachers and paraprofessionals can be a powerful team. Together, you can make a real difference in the lives of children. If you have a problem or concern with someone, go directly to the individual to discuss it professionally. Maintain a constructive attitude—if a comment isn't helpful or positive, it's best left unsaid.

Role of the Paraprofessional:

Teachers and paraprofessionals are partners in education, working together to provide the best educational experience possible for each child. The special education paraeducator's role is to assist the teacher and allow more effective utilization of the teacher's abilities and professional knowledge. The teacher must function in a leadership role. The teacher is responsible for

ensuring that the students are moving toward achieving individualized goals and objectives. Paraeducators serve under the direction and supervision of the teacher to assist in carrying out the individualized education program.

Paraprofessional Responsibilities (may include other duties as assigned):

The following is a list of responsibilities you may have in the classroom:

- Work directly with the assigned students per the daily or weekly schedule.
- Record accurate data on skills and behaviors as directed.
- Implement positive behavior strategies and supports to increase learners' independence with academic, social-emotional, and self-help skills & decrease maladaptive behaviors.
- If needed, assist with material preparation (making copies, cutting, laminating, etc.).
- Follow the teacher's direction if the schedule, skill acquisition program, or behavior strategy changes.
- Supervise students in the hallway, recess, bus runs, and other school areas.
- Assist the teacher with crisis problems and behavior management.
- Carry out instructional programs designed by the teacher.
- Assist students with personal care when applicable, including toileting, feeding, and hygiene.

General Paraprofessional Expectations and Conduct:

1. Be Open-Minded and Receptive: Approach interactions with a willingness to listen and understand others' perspectives rather than focusing on being right. Collaborate and learn from one another.
2. Minimize Distractions: Keep classroom distractions, such as cell phone use and casual conversations, to a minimum. Cross-talk with other staff can cause students to feel overwhelmed or dysregulated. Maintain a focused and calm environment that supports student success.
3. Actively Supervise: Always intervene and address concerning behavior in all settings, including hallways, the cafeteria, and the playground. Consistent expectations and intervention support a safe and structured school environment. Intervene/address all concerning behaviors in the hallway, lunchroom, and playground.
4. Dress Professionally and Practically: Staff should be prepared for active, hands-on work with students. Recommended attire includes:
 - a. Close-toed, low-heeled shoes for quick movement and safety.
 - b. Clothing that is modest, non-revealing, easy to move in, and not likely to be tugged or pulled by students.
 - c. Outfits should be clean, comfortable, odor-free, and appropriate for daily responsibilities.
5. Promote Health and Safety: Your conduct should foster a safe and healthy learning space for all: model and support hygiene, social manners, academic effort, and positive peer interactions.
6. Commit to Growth: Take responsibility for your professional development. Learn from your peers and team specialists. Be proactive in developing your skills and seeking support when needed.
7. Model Professionalism and Respect: Represent the district in a positive light and build strong, respectful relationships with students, staff, and the community.
8. Communicate Concerns Appropriately:
 - a. If you're asked to take on a task outside your comfort zone, bring your concerns to your Case Manager or Administrator for support.
 - b. When unsure about a procedure or situation, ask questions and seek clarity.
 - c. Acknowledge mistakes with humility—we are all human, and learning from errors is part of growth.
9. Address Workplace Conflicts Constructively:

- a. Speak directly and respectfully with coworkers if issues arise.
 - b. Avoid gossiping or venting to others, which can harm the work environment.
 - c. If a resolution isn't possible between individuals, seek guidance from a supervisor, principal, or administrator.
When approached with a peer complaint, help the person decide whether to speak with the coworker or involve administration. Timely resolution prevents further conflict.
10. Dependability Matters: Your regular and punctual attendance is essential. Staff and students rely on you each day. If you're delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, call the school immediately. Ensure substitute plans are thorough when absent and include documentation such as the Confidentiality Statement.

Responding to Feedback:

1. Daily Guidance: Teachers will provide paraprofessionals with daily assignments and instructional support aligned with student needs. Training on student programs and behavior plans will occur before sessions whenever possible.
2. On-the-Spot Coaching: Teachers may also provide immediate verbal feedback during the day. This is intended to reinforce consistency and implement behavior strategies effectively. Please do not interpret this feedback as criticism; it is a professional tool to support the team's shared success.
3. Evidence-Based Practices: All coaching and feedback are rooted in research-driven methodologies, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The aim is to improve student outcomes through coordinated, consistent staff efforts.

Paraprofessional Expectations in the Center-Based Program Classrooms:

1. Understand Student Needs: You are expected to read and fully understand the Individualized Education Program (IEP), including the needs, goals, and accommodations of each student you support.
2. Proactively Share Observations: You are responsible for communicating relevant information about students to your Supervising Teacher and Case Manager. While they may ask questions, they may not always know what information to request—be proactive in offering insights and asking for guidance.
3. Clarify Roles:
 - a. The Case Manager ensures the IEP is implemented appropriately.
 - b. The Supervising Teacher manages the daily classroom environment and provides direction.
4. Use Time Wisely: If you find yourself without a task:
 - a. Immediately ask your Supervising Teacher for direction.
 - b. If they have no immediate need, ask them to contact another teacher who may benefit from your support.
5. Avoid Appearing Idle: Being unoccupied sends the wrong message to colleagues and administrators, potentially leading them to believe your role is unnecessary. Your work is vital—make sure it shows. Perception matters.

Paraprofessional Expectations in the General Ed Classrooms:

1. Know Your Students: Understand the IEP needs, goals, and accommodations of the students you are assigned to support. You help ensure the IEP is implemented effectively within the general education environment.
2. Support the Teacher: You work under the direction of the general education classroom teacher. Be attentive to their guidance and responsive to student needs.

3. Build Professional Rapport: Develop a respectful, supportive relationship with students, not a friendship. Maintain clear boundaries while being approachable and kind.
4. Be Punctual and Present: Arrive on time at your assigned classroom. Avoid lingering in hallways or arriving late, which affects supervision and instructional consistency.
5. Stay Engaged and Proactive:
 - a. If you are not directly engaged with an assigned student, look for ways to contribute in the classroom.
 - b. Assisting general education students in small groups is appropriate, especially if it aligns with classroom goals or supports your assigned student.
 - c. Paraprofessionals in general education may also be asked to suggest or develop strategies to support classroom activities.
6. Accountability: Administration will ask general education teachers and Case Managers to provide feedback on your performance. Consistently demonstrate professionalism, initiative, and dedication to your role.

Case Manager Expectations:

1. Assignment & Schedule Oversight:

The Case Manager is responsible for assigning daily tasks and schedules to paraprofessionals. These assignments may change based on evolving student needs and program requirements.
2. Daily Supervision:

The case manager oversees the paraprofessionals' day-to-day responsibilities and ensures appropriate alignment with student IEPs and classroom goals.
3. Communication & Collaboration:

Case Managers must regularly collaborate with other ISD teachers, staff, and general education teachers to ensure that IEP goals and accommodations are understood and implemented effectively. Paraprofessionals must be familiar with these plans and support their application in general education settings.
4. Support for Substitute Coverage:

When a paraprofessional is absent, the Case Manager ensures the substitute has sufficient guidance to fulfill the role. If any concerns arise, the Principal will follow up directly with the Case Manager.
5. Substitute Preparedness:

Paraprofessionals must maintain a subfolder with a clearly outlined daily schedule and instructions. Consider: *What must someone know to perform their duties effectively for the day?* Include details that will support continuity of care and instruction.

Promoting Independence:

1. Foster Growth Through Support Fading:

While students may initially need high levels of assistance, the goal is to transition toward coaching and indirect support as quickly as appropriate. Avoid overprotectiveness—our mission is to promote independence, not dependence.
2. Encourage Peer Interaction:

Independence and social development are enhanced when students engage naturally with peers. Avoid hovering or constantly sitting/standing beside students. Allow room for authentic social interaction and independence.
3. Use the Least Intrusive Support:

Start with minimal assistance and increase only as needed. Before staff involvement, empower students to rely on their skills, routines, and peer cues.

4. **Model and Reinforce Appropriate Behavior:**
Highlight positive behaviors and explain their outcomes. Peer modeling and natural consequences are powerful tools for promoting growth and social acceptance.
5. **Support Decision-Making:**
Rather than offering answers, provide students with the resources to solve problems independently. Give them opportunities to make choices and guide their learning.
6. **Maintain Professional Boundaries:**
Build supportive, respectful relationships without becoming a "friend." Boundaries are essential:
 - Do not engage in personal communications (e.g., texting or friending students on social media).
 - Avoid favoritism—treat all students equitably and distribute your support and attention fairly.
 - End each day on a positive note—a smile or kind word goes a long way in building student trust and morale.
7. **Respond Professionally to Behavior Challenges:**
When students display disrespectful behavior, maintain your composure. Do not mirror their tone or frustration. Disabilities cannot be "yelled out" of a child. What you *can* do is:
 - Provide consistent structure, routine, and consequences.
 - Maintain a calm, neutral tone of voice.
 - Uphold a trust-based relationship with the student.
 - Use the CPI Verbal De-escalation Continuum (the kite) as your guide. Review it often and respond rationally, not emotionally.

Behavior Management:

Many of our students have special behavioral needs. The Case Manager is responsible for communicating specialized behavior plans with paraprofessionals and modeling how behaviors should be handled. All educational team members must remain consistent and predictable when addressing problem behaviors with all students.

As a paraprofessional, it's essential to avoid labeling students as "bad" or "naughty." These labels can damage trust and discourage growth. Instead, focus on helping students understand the importance of being **emotionally regulated**—when students learn to manage their emotions, they can better make safe, respectful, and positive choices.

Encourage regulation by:

- Modeling calm behavior during challenging moments.
- Using language like "Let's take a break so we can think clearly," instead of placing blame.
- Recognizing small successes in self-regulation and decision-making.

Your role in supporting emotional development is key to student success—responding with empathy and consistency helps create a safe and respectful learning environment for all.

1. Avoid power struggles. Do not "pick up the rope." You are the adult and the professional.
2. Redirect students by telling them what they should do, **not what they should not do**. Be sensitive to a student's feelings when providing redirections. Redirect quickly and discreetly.
3. Limit verbal redirections to minimize disruption to group activities. Communicate what you need to the students using as few words as possible. If directed by the case manager, use picture cue cards.

4. Provide clear expectations of behavior and check for understanding of those expectations.
5. Provide prescribed, fair, and consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior. If in doubt, contact the administration and the case manager.
6. Catch the student displaying appropriate behavior or finishing a task well and praise him/her.
7. Be specific in praising desired behavior, such as "I like how Carrie is working on her math." "John, I like the way you quickly lined up."
8. Consistently follow individual behavior intervention plans developed by the student's team of professionals.
9. Continually evaluate the stress and frustration level of students. Communicate your observations and perspectives with your Supervising Teacher.
10. Remember that modifying behaviors tends to worsen before they begin to improve.
11. Maintain a calm and neutral tone of voice. Save a loud voice for severe and dangerous situations.
12. Use positive body language. Try not to stand over students or use frustrated facial expressions.
13. Guard yourself against being more ready to criticize than to praise.
14. Assist the teacher in observing, recording, and charting behavior and implementing Behavior Improvement Plans.
15. Debrief crises with the supervising teacher and document them as required.
16. Follow the behavior plan.

You provide behavioral personal care services for students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others. Students receive these services because their IEP team deems this to be the most appropriate and least restrictive environment for said student.

Impeding student behaviors can include:

- Non-compliance
- Physical aggression towards peers/adults includes hitting, kicking, spitting, pinching, biting, throwing objects, etc.
- Damage to property such as tipping over desks, tearing things off of walls, "clearing" a desk or table, etc.
- Verbal outbursts towards peers/adults include yelling, screaming, swearing, name-calling, etc.
- Eloping (aka running from where the student is supposed to be)

In this classroom, there is a high probability that these things will happen to you. You may be hit and kicked; you may have objects thrown at you; students will call you names and swear at you. It's part of this job. When it happens, remain calm and neutral-faced; keep a calm, steady, and quiet voice. If a student gets a reaction out of you, the behavior is more likely to recur. Taking a student's behavior personally is counterproductive, even if it sounds personal (i.e., if he/she calls you a name). Call the team for assistance. If you are escalated, you must be professional enough to have a staff member take your place.

If you have not already been, you will be trained in a crisis intervention program (e.g., Ukeru, CPI, Safety-Care), which will teach you how to properly de-escalate a situation before the need for physical management arises.

Seclusion and Restraint Protocol:

Seclusion and restraint are **not behavioral strategies or interventions**—they are **emergency safety responses** used **only** when all other de-escalation efforts have failed. These measures are implemented **only in situations of immediate and imminent danger** to the student or others, and **only when the risk of harm is greater without their use**.

These emergency responses should be viewed as a **last resort**, not part of a student's behavior support plan. They must be stopped when the student is no longer a risk to themselves or others. Read this document from Michigan parent advocates: [EndSaR](#).

Following any use of seclusion or restraint:

- Complete [all required documentation](#) without delay.
- **Conduct a debriefing** with involved staff to review the incident, reflect on prevention efforts, and identify ways to strengthen future support.




Confidentiality:

Confidentiality is an essential aspect of your job as a paraprofessional. Through your work, you will learn sensitive information about students and families. Such information is personal and private. It must be shared only within the family and the appropriate school team. Not only is it potentially disrespectful to do so, *but it is also illegal*.

Beyond students with disabilities, the privacy rights of all students and families associated with your school must be respected. The following are suggested guidelines for maintaining confidentiality:

1. Avoid talking about students, other personnel, or other personal matters in front of students.
2. Never discuss information about a student in a public place (e.g., staff lounge, hallway, grocery store, or restaurant).
3. Avoid using names if you are asked about your job.
4. Never discuss information about one student with the parents of another student.
5. Never discuss information about one student with another student.
6. Never discuss information about a student with school personnel who are not considered a member of that student's service-providing team.
7. The school must have written permission from the parent to release any information from the education record.
8. When conferencing or writing confidential information about a student or family, be aware of those around you who may be within hearing distance. Look for a more private place within the school building.
9. No matter who asks you a question about a student, if you are unsure whether you should answer, DON'T. You can do this gently and politely by stating that it is against school policy and the law to do so. Remember, only staff members who need to know should be given information about a student.
10. You may be asked to document a situation in a student's anecdotal record, which could be viewed by parents and /or the court. Keep information objective and factual. ALWAYS write as if the parent is reading it, as they can get a copy. Keep judgmental language **out** of documentation.

START Resources - MDE, Office of Special Ed Project

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports 	Looks Like...	Tools
	CLASSROOM 	
13. Behavioral Expectations are positively stated, visual, clear, appropriate for the level of the student, and posted. Used to increase wanted behavior by noticing when they are following the rules and reviewing them daily or when needed.	→ Visual Examples → High School Video	◇ Behavioral Expectations - Visual Template ◇ Expectations - Visual Template ◇ Learning Environment Checklist
14. Error Correction Procedures are used when expectations are not followed.	→ Visual Examples → Letting a student repeatedly make a mistake does not teach them. → Prevent mistakes and allow more opportunities for reinforcement. → Reteach skills that need to be taught. → 1:1 Video	◇ Errorless Learning Flowchart ◇ Prompt Hierarchy Online
15. Positive Feedback is specific and provided at least 4 times more frequently than corrective feedback or prompting.	→ Visual Examples → Elementary video → Middle school video → High school video	◇ 5:1 Poster ◇ 100 Ways to Say Good Job
16. Reinforcement Systems are used for students who require additional support to increase engagement and independence in task routines and activities.	→ Visual Examples → Students should know in advance what they are working for by using choice boards/lists. → Reinforcement distribution varies according to students' needs. → Can be individualized to incorporate students' interests. → Should be for specific behaviors that are posted and encouraged. → Independence facilitator uses in School Video → How to Video	◇ AFIRM Reinforcement Module ◇ Ideas for Reward ◇ Home Reward Ideas for Teens ◇ Choice Board Templates ◇ Reinforcement Guide for Families ◇ Virtual Reward Room Example
17. Choice-Making and Flexibility: opportunities for choices are numerous and embedded within all activities. This may mean more flexibility for staff and focused strategies on avoiding power struggles.	→ Visual Examples → Give students their choice → Change a mini schedule → Come back to a difficult activity at a different time → Switch staff → Adopt a different mindset	◇ Ways to Provide Choices Poster ◇ Strategies for Single Parents at Home ◇ Social Behavior Mapping
18. Proactive and Preventive Strategies are evident to increase	→ Visual Examples	◇ Behavior Contract Template ◇ Behavior Contract Training

engagement and prevent challenging behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Students can access all of the school and classroom tier 1 supports. → Tier 2 supports are used when needed. → Incredible 5-Point Scale → Behavior Contract Video → Check-in/Check-out Video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Check-in/ Check out Training ◇ Friday 5 Template ◇ 5 Point Scale
19. Break Procedures are specified and implemented consistently to assist students with self-regulation. Students are supported to independently initiate and return from break.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Visual Examples → Bitmoji Classroom Example → There is more than one type of break - be clear on which one the student is using → Model, allow time for practice before the student <i>needs</i> it → Designate a specific break area → Designate what the student can do (avoid reward activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ START Protocols / Scripts ◇ Types of Breaks ◇ Teaching Taking a Break for Home ◇ Video modeling for middle schoolers
20. Differential Reinforcement (DR) is used in a consistent manner to reinforce expected behaviors and remove reinforcement for challenging behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Visual Examples → Explanation video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ AFIRM Differential Reinforcement Module
21. Responses to Challenging Behavior are emotionally neutral and non-punitive and incorporate more frequent use of visual supports than verbal interaction. Adults quickly and consistently follow a documented behavior support procedure or individual behavior plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Visual Examples → Keeping the Volume Down → Functions of Behavior Video → FBA Example → START website BIP examples → BIP Fidelity Checklist Example → Emergency Intervention Plan example → BIP Review Meeting Example 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ START Protocols / Scripts ◇ BIP Fidelity Checklist Template ◇ FBA Template ◇ Behavior Response Plan ◇ Keeping the Volume Down Full Folder ◇ Keeping the Volume Down Cheat Sheet ◇ Stages of Challenging Behavior ◇ BIP Peer review Rubric ◇ MDE Emergency Intervention Plan FAQs ◇ BIP Review Meeting Checklist ◇ BIP Review Meeting Template

GOISD District Confidentiality Agreement

Federal law guarantees privacy and confidentiality for special education students and their records. As an employee of the GOISD, you may, under limited circumstances, have access to sensitive student information while on campus. Student Educational Records include all records, files, documents, and other materials that contain personally identifiable information on any student.

As a GOISD employee, you must agree to the following:

1. I will not discuss any student's identity, behavior, or needs within the GOISD with anyone not authorized to work directly with the student.
2. I will not discuss with others the content of any specific student records, nor will I disclose personally identifiable student information, special education status, or other information regarding individual students.
3. I understand that questions about individual students or the content of confidential student records must be directed to the case manager, teacher of record, or school administrator.
4. I understand that appropriate conversations with school personnel who work directly with the student shall be held privately. I will not speak of the student in front of them or their peers. Conversations held in an out-of-school public location, including with school personnel, are not admissible.
5. The classroom teacher should communicate directly with parents in cooperation with the special education teacher. Paraprofessionals should defer all parent requests and messages to the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or case manager.

I read and will follow the GOISD Paraprofessional Confidentiality Agreement.

Sign, date, and return this form to the principal.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Para Training Videos - Kent ISD:

Each of the six modules below provides the information, content, and knowledge to prepare you for your role as a Paraeducator supporting students receiving special education services. Each module contains one or more videos on specific topics. Using a Chromebook, go to your email to access this document. Print the exit ticket before beginning the video. Watch the short videos within each module, complete the **Exit Ticket responses**, and **submit the finished ticket to Sarah Ozzello at sozzello@goisd.org**.

[PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING EXIT TICKET](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION OVERVIEW

RESPONSIBILITIES

TEACHING STRATEGIES

BEHAVIOR

COMMUNICATION

ACCESSIBILITY

Glossary of Key Terms for Paraprofessionals

Provided by Heidi Lauzon, Director of Special Education

This glossary is designed to help paraprofessionals understand key expectations, procedures, and concepts relevant to their role in the GOISD Center-Based Programs.

Absence Procedures

Paraprofessionals must follow absence reporting protocols as outlined in the Non-Certified Staff Handbook. In addition, they must email their Case Manager and Administrator as soon as they anticipate an absence. Regular and reliable in-person attendance is essential; unexcused absences or tardiness can disrupt the educational environment.

At-Will Employment

Unless covered by a collective bargaining agreement, GOISD employment is at-will and may be ended by either party. This handbook does not create an employment contract or guarantee continued employment.

Behavior Management

Focuses on emotional regulation using consistent strategies. Key practices include:

- Avoiding power struggles
 - Redirecting positively
 - Limiting verbal corrections
 - Providing clear expectations and consequences
 - Following individual behavior plans
 - Maintaining a calm tone and neutral body language
- Paraprofessionals support students whose behaviors impact learning.

Challenging Behavior (Responses to)

Responses must be emotionally neutral and non-punitive. Visual supports should be used more than verbal prompts. Always follow documented behavior plans.

Choice-Making and Flexibility

Students should be given choices throughout the day. Staff must remain flexible to adapt to student needs and avoid power struggles.

Crisis Intervention Training

Certification in approved crisis intervention techniques is required. This includes strategies for de-escalation and, when applicable, safe physical interventions. (e.g., Ukeru, CPI, Safety-Care)

District Email

Check district email daily for updates, including Medicaid "Moment in Time" notifications and administrative messages.

District Technology Resources

Technology is provided for professional use. Users must sign an Acceptable Use Agreement. There is no expectation of privacy, and misuse may result in disciplinary action.

Dress Professionally and Practically

Wear modest, clean, comfortable clothing that allows for movement and active student support. Closed-toe, low-heeled shoes are required.

Error Correction Procedures

Reteach and model expected behaviors when errors occur. This helps reinforce positive behaviors and prevents repeated mistakes.

Feedback (Responding to)

Teachers will provide ongoing feedback to support your role. Feedback is rooted in evidence-based practices and intended as coaching, not criticism.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

IEPs outline student-specific goals and accommodations. Paraprofessionals assist in implementing these plans under the direction of the Case Manager and supervising teacher.

Personal Care Services

This includes toileting, hygiene, feeding, and other services for students with IEPs. These services are Medicaid-billable and require proper training and documentation.

Phones and Personal Business

The use of personal devices should be limited to scheduled breaks, with emergencies being the exception. Distractions in the classroom should be minimized.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

PBIS promotes proactive and supportive behavior strategies. Components include:

- Clear expectations
- Error correction
- Positive reinforcement
- Student choice
- Consistent routines

Positive Feedback

To reinforce desired behaviors, offer specific praise frequently—ideally at a 4:1 ratio compared to corrections.

Promoting Independence

Provide students with support in developing autonomy by fading assistance, modeling skills, encouraging peer interaction, and providing choice-making opportunities.

Reinforcement Systems

Students may have personalized systems to motivate learning and task completion. Reinforcement should be meaningful and communicated to students.

Role of the Paraprofessional

Paraprofessionals work under the direction of teachers to:

- Support students academically and behaviorally
- Collect data
- Prepare materials
- Provide personal care
- Assist with classroom management
- Implement instructional programs

Seclusion and Restraint Protocol

Seclusion or restraint may only be used in emergencies with an immediate and imminent risk of harm to the student or others, and no other safe intervention is effective. All incidents must be fully documented and followed by a debriefing with the involved staff. Physical contact with a student must never be made out of anger or used as punishment—such actions are strictly prohibited and against the law.

Special Education Mission Statement

GOISD is committed to a safe, respectful, and inclusive educational environment that supports academic, behavioral, and social growth and emphasizes independence and individualized success.

Supervision Structure

Paraprofessionals report to both (may be the same person):

- **Supervising Teacher:** Oversees classroom instruction
- **Case Manager:** Directs special education services and IEP implementation

Time Worked Outside Regular Hours

All extra time must be pre-approved by the administration. In emergencies, notify the administration immediately and record all time worked.