

# **Guidelines for Consideration of Paraprofessional Support Services**

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## Rationale

These special education guidelines were developed as a reference tool to help Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams\* make important decisions about student supports. The guidelines outline a process to help IEP teams determine when the supplementary services of a paraprofessional are required to assist children with disabilities and provide a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE). The document is intended to be used as a basic template, which can be customized to include district specific policies, forms, schedules, job descriptions, etc., as appropriate.

Whenever an IEP Team considers the possible need to assign paraprofessional support services, it is expected that all district staff participating as IEP team members will use these guidelines.

## Philosophy

An over-arching goal for all students with disabilities under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of (IDEA)* is to meet the needs that result from each child's disability, and to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum. [34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i)(A)] In meeting the unique needs of all eligible children, the IEP Team must ensure placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE) in accordance with *IDEA*

### **Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment.**

- (a) Each LEA shall ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private providers of special education, are educated with children who do not have disabilities and that, consistent with **34 CFR 300.114**, special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Since the early 1990s, school districts have participated in numerous projects and initiatives in support of inclusion. Inclusion, or inclusive education, is not a program or a model. It is the belief that all children have the right to access a quality education, to the greatest extent possible and appropriate, in a regular classroom setting, and to be taught by qualified professional staff. In order to support student success and meet the unique needs of all learners, there is a call for creativity, flexibility and training to develop programs that are universally designed.

Paraprofessional support is one example of supplementary aids and services that may be necessary to ensure a child with a disability's access to, participation and progress in the general curriculum. When the IEP team determines that a paraprofessional is required to assist a student in fulfilling IEP goal(s), (e.g., behavioral, self-help, mobility, communication) the annual IEP goal(s) for which the paraprofessional will provide support should reflect as much independence

and self-advocacy as appropriate for the student. When a paraprofessional is assigned to assist a student, short-term objectives or benchmarks should be written to promote increased independence. To avoid potentially negative consequences such as social isolation, the failure to

develop self-regulation behaviors, and/or over-dependence on adults, the support of a paraprofessional should be considered temporary and shall be regularly assessed through the IEP process.

## **Legal Background**

State and federal special education laws and rules emphasize the requirement to educate children with disabilities in regular classes with their nondisabled peers. In making program and placement decisions, the IEP team must determine the least restrictive environment in which the goals and objectives determined necessary for the student can be met. Supports, services or modifications, including supports for the teacher, must be provided when necessary for the child to benefit from his/her educational program. Removal from the regular education environment may occur only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular class with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Many students' IEPs include related services, which are defined as *“transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education...”* (34 CFR 300.34) Related services include, but are not limited to:

- Audiology services
- School health services (including assistance with health-related needs during the school day, e.g. catheterization)
- Counseling services
- Medical services (only to diagnose or evaluate a student's disability)
- Social work services in school
- Speech-language therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Transportation
- Orientation and mobility services
- Parent counseling and training
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Recreation
- Rehabilitation counseling services
- Interpreting Services

Related services are determined by the IEP team on a case-by-case basis as required to assist children with disabilities to benefit from special education and enable them to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.

The IDEA allows for “...paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised ... to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities” (34 CFR 300.136).

When a paraprofessional assists in the provision of special education and related services, the following requirements from the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004* and the *NH Rules for the Education of Children with Disabilities* must be met:

## **Definitions from Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004**

### **300.156 Personnel qualifications**

(a) General. The SEA must establish and maintain qualifications to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out the purposes of this part are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained, including that those personnel have the content knowledge and skills to serve children with disabilities.

(b) Related services personnel and paraprofessionals. The qualifications under paragraph (a) of this section must include qualifications for related services personnel and paraprofessionals that

—  
(1) Are consistent with any State-approved or State-recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the professional discipline in which those personnel are providing special education or related services; and

(2) Ensure that related services personnel who deliver services in their discipline or profession

(i) Meet the requirements of paragraph (b)(1) of this section; and

(ii) Have not had certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis; and

(iii) Allow paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulation, or written policy, in meeting the requirements of this part to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services under this part to children with disabilities.

(c) Qualifications for special education teachers. The qualifications described in paragraph (a) of this section must ensure that each person employed as a public school special education teacher in the State who teaches in an elementary school, middle school, or secondary school is highly qualified as a special education teacher by the deadline established in section 1119(a)(2) of the ESEA.

(d) Policy. In implementing this section, a State must adopt a policy that includes a requirement that LEAs in the State take measurable steps to recruit, hire, train, and retain highly qualified personnel to provide special education and related services under this part to children with disabilities.

(e) Rule of construction. Notwithstanding any other individual right of action that a parent or student may maintain under this part, nothing in this part shall be construed to create a right of action on behalf of an individual student or a class of students for the failure of a particular SEA or LEA employee to be highly qualified, or to prevent a parent from filing a complaint about staff qualification with the SEA as provided for under this part.

(f) Initial IEP Team meeting for child under Part C. In the case of a child who was previously served under Part C of the Act, an invitation to the initial IEP Team meeting must, at the request of the parent, be sent to the Part C service coordinator or other representatives of the Part C system to assist with the smooth transition of services.

## Guidelines for Consideration of Paraprofessional Support Services

This checklist is to be used as a tool for schools to collect and analyze data and to discuss if more information is needed in order for the IEP team to determine if supplementary paraprofessional support services are needed. *It is not to be used to pre-determine services in the IEP.*

The utilization of supplementary paraprofessional support services:

- should be considered a highly restrictive intervention;
- should be considered **only** if the student has demonstrated an inability to acquire skills in a group situation or generalize skills across multiple settings as evidenced by data;
- is to promote the student's independence and expedite/accelerate development that will lead to the student generalizing IEP goals and objectives.

|   |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----|
| <b>A. Functional Life Skills Concerns</b>   |                    |                      |                         | YES                   | NO |
| 1. Is the student having severe difficulties with functional life skills?   |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| If YES, please complete the rest of section A.<br>If NO, proceed to section B.  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| 2. What type of support does the student need in order to be successful in the following areas? Check the appropriate boxes.  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| <b>Skill</b>  | <b>Independent</b> | <b>Adult Prompts</b> | <b>Physical Support</b> | <b>Other Supports</b> |    |
| Toileting   |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Mobility  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Eating  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Dressing  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Self-care   |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Personal safety   |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| Other: (specify)  |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| 3. Has data been collected consistently for at least 10 days on the student's functional life skills?<br>If NO, continue the student's current educational program and collect relevant data.   |                    |                      |                         | YES                   | NO |
| 3a. Summarize and attach the baseline data that identifies the student's skill level on each area of concern. Include a description of what the student currently can do, in what settings, and how often the student will attempt the skill (example: student does not have bladder control and must have diaper changed at least hourly throughout the school day). |                    |                      |                         |                       |    |
| 4. Are visual supports in place for skills that require prompting?<br>If YES, list visual supports that are in place for skills that require prompting.<br><br>If NO, assign a team member to review the possibility of increasing mini schedules or visual supports for the student in each of the areas listed in #2.<br><br>Name of Team Member:                   |                    |                      |                         | YES                   | NO |

| <b>B. Communication Concerns</b> (This section to be completed with input from the special education teacher, speech pathologist and others with relevant knowledge and data).  | YES | NO |
|---|-----|----|
| <p>1. <b>Are there concerns regarding the student's communication skills? (i.e., pragmatics, receptive language, expressive language, articulation, hearing)</b><br/> <b>If YES, please describe and then complete the rest of section B.</b></p> <p><b>If NO, proceed to section C.</b></p>  |     |    |
| <p>2. <b>Has data been collected consistently throughout a 10 day period?</b><br/> <b>If NO, continue the student's current educational program and collect relevant data.</b></p> <p><b>If YES, please attach data summary.</b></p>  |     |    |
| <p>3. <b>Does the student have communication goals in the IEP?</b><br/> <b>If NO, please hold an IEP team meeting to review/revise the IEP.</b></p>   |     |    |
| <p>4. <b>Does the student receive services from the Speech Language Pathologist?</b><br/> <b>If NO, please collaborate with the SLP regarding the concerns in #B1.</b></p>  |     |    |
| <p>5. <b>Does the student have a functional, accessible method of communication at all times? (Prompted responses or providing answers to questions is not an adequate level of communicative ability to prevent behavior problems)</b><br/> <b>If YES, please describe the student's communication method, including technology currently used to support communication, learning, and classroom interaction:</b></p> <p><b>If NO, consult and collaborate with the SLP.</b></p> |     |    |
| <p>6. <b>Does the student use the communication method(s) independently to communicate needs and wants?</b></p>   |     |    |
| <p><b>C. Social Skills Concerns</b> (This section to be completed with input from the special education teacher and behavior specialist or psychologist and others with relevant knowledge and data).</p>   | YES | NO |
| <p>1. <b>Is there a concern about the student's social skills that interfere with educational achievement?</b><br/> <b>If YES, please complete the rest of section C.</b><br/> <b>If NO, proceed to section D.</b></p>  |     |    |

|  |            |           |
|--|------------|-----------|
| <p><b>2. Identify the specific social skills difficulties the student is currently experiencing. (List the skills that the student doesn't have that are interfering with his functioning, e.g., handling teasing, accepting criticism, etc.)</b></p> <p><b>In what school settings?</b></p>   |            |           |
| <p><b>3. Does the student have opportunities to interact with typically developing peers?</b><br/> <b>If NO, describe the potential areas of interaction that would allow the student to have opportunities to engage with typically developing peers.</b></p> <p><b>Provide an overview of current opportunities to interact:</b></p> | <p>YES</p> | <p>NO</p> |
| <p><b>4. Does the student currently have social skills goals and objectives in his/her IEP that address the needs identified above?</b></p> <p><b>If NO, convene an IEP meeting to discuss the student's need for social skills goals and objectives.</b></p>  |            |           |
| <p><b>5. Have the social skills G/O been addressed consistently for at least six weeks?</b></p>  |            |           |
| <p><b>6. Has data been collected consistently throughout a six week period on the social skills G/O?</b><br/> <b>If YES, please attach data summary.</b></p>   |            |           |
| <p><b>6a. If YES, is the student showing progress in utilizing appropriate social skills?</b></p> <p><b>6b. If NO, review/revise the social skills instruction, generalization plan and collect relevant data.</b></p>   |            |           |

|   |      |       |           |     |    |
|---|------|-------|-----------|-----|----|
| <b>D. Behavioral Concerns</b> (This section to be completed with input from the special education teacher and behavior specialist or psychologist and others with relevant knowledge and data).   |      |       |           | YES | NO |
| 1. <b>Does the student have severe behaviors that interfere with academic achievement?</b><br>If NO, proceed to the Summary section.<br>If YES, please complete the rest of section D.  |      |       |           |     |    |
| 2. <b>Does the student have a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)?</b><br>If NO, begin the process to complete an FBA for the student.   |      |       |           |     |    |
| 2a) <b>If YES, is the FBA updated and currently relevant?</b><br>If NO, review/revise the FBA.  |      |       |           |     |    |
| 3. <b>Are there concerning behavior(s) interfering with learning of self or others?</b><br>List below.  |      |       |           |     |    |
| Behavior  | When | Where | Frequency |     |    |
|   |      |       |           |     |    |
|   |      |       |           |     |    |
|   |      |       |           |     |    |
|   |      |       |           |     |    |
| 4. <b>Has quantifiable data been taken on all behaviors of concern for at least 10 school days?</b><br><br>List data collection methods and observations:<br><br>What patterns or trends does the data show? Is the target behavior(s) increasing, decreasing, staying the same? Attach comments. |      |       |           | YES | NO |
| 5. <b>Does the student have a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)?</b><br>If NO, request parental consent for FBA to determine if a BIP is needed for the student.   |      |       |           |     |    |
| 6. <b>Does the student have measurable behavior goals in the IEP?</b><br>If NO, convene an IEP team meeting to review/revise the IEP.   |      |       |           |     |    |
| 7. <b>Have behavioral interventions stated in the BIP been consistently implemented for at least 6 weeks?</b>   |      |       |           |     |    |

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| <p>8. Has data been collected consistently throughout the 6-week period?</p> <p>If NO, review/revise BIP and collect relevant data.<br/>If YES, please attach data summary.</p> <p>How effective is the plan in addressing the student's needs?</p> <p>Have modifications to the plan been considered?</p> | YES | NO |
|--|-----|----|

9. Describe supports being utilized to implement behavior intervention plan.

**Summary**

| Functional Life Skills   | Communication /Instruction   | Social Skills   | Behavior  | Inclusion  |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> G-tube feeding*<br><input type="checkbox"/> Medication*<br><input type="checkbox"/> Suctioning*<br><input type="checkbox"/> Food preparation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Diaper changing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Feeding-full support<br><input type="checkbox"/> Seizures*<br><input type="checkbox"/> Lift/Transfer<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____<br><br>*Specialized physical health care plan or emergency plan. | <input type="checkbox"/> Unique strategies not typical for class<br><input type="checkbox"/> Visual communication system<br><input type="checkbox"/> Structured teaching<br><input type="checkbox"/> High level of physical prompts<br><input type="checkbox"/> High level of verbal prompts<br><input type="checkbox"/> Assistive technology support<br><input type="checkbox"/> Sign language<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Student requires direct instruction in social skills<br><input type="checkbox"/> Self-regulation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Anger management<br><input type="checkbox"/> Impulse control<br><input type="checkbox"/> Social-pragmatic language<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior plan implementation or documentation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Physically aggressive<br><input type="checkbox"/> Non-compliant in class<br><input type="checkbox"/> Non-complaint on campus<br><input type="checkbox"/> Runs away<br><input type="checkbox"/> Self-injurious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional support<br><input type="checkbox"/> Physical support /positioning<br><input type="checkbox"/> Safety supervision<br><input type="checkbox"/> Social support<br><input type="checkbox"/> Transitions<br><input type="checkbox"/> Recess/lunch<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

1. Describe supports currently provided

**2. List additional supports needed to implement IEP.**

---

**3. Attach a fading plan designed to reduce the dependency and eliminate the need for individualized support in each area.**

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**4. Please indicate potential staff that will be providing the individualized instructional support in needed areas: (identify by position)**

- **Functional Life Skills** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Communication** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Social Skills** \_\_\_\_\_
- **Behavior** \_\_\_\_\_

---

**5. Staff responsible for leading and directing the activities of the individual providing the support if the person providing the support is a paraprofessional:**

\_\_\_ **Teacher (specify position: \_\_\_\_\_)**

\_\_\_ **Other school personnel (specify position: \_\_\_\_\_)**

\_\_\_ **Other (specify hours per week/month \_\_\_\_\_)**

|                     |          |        |
|---------------------|----------|--------|
| Student Name:       | School:  | Grade: |
| Name of Participant | Position | Date   |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
|                     |          |        |
| Completed by:       |          |        |

### School Day Analysis

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Program/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

| Time | Classroom Scheduled Activity | What student can do without assistance | What student needs accommodation/ modification assistance to complete | What natural support is currently available | Shared paraprofessional support required | Individual paraprofessional support required |
|------|------------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
|      |                              |  |   |   |  |  |

## Appendix A

### Resource List

#### *Paraprofessional Support Services and Related Issues*

#### **SECTION I: Resources authored/coauthored by Michael Giangreco\***

<http://www.uvm.edu/cdci/evolve>

#### **Guidelines for Making Decisions about IEP Services**

Michael F. Giangreco; UVM; Center on Disability and Community Inclusion; Burlington, VT

#### **Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools**

Michael F. Giangreco, Ph.D. Ann T. Halvorsen, Ph.D.  
University of Vermont California State University at Hayward  
Mary Beth Doyle, Ph.D. Stephen M. Broer, Psy.D.  
St. Michael's College, Colchester, VT Northwest Counseling & Support Services, Inc., St. Albans, VT

#### **“Be Careful What You Wish for ...”: Five Reasons to Be Concerned About the Assignment of Individual Paraprofessionals**

Michael F. Giangreco • Susan Yuan • Barbara McKenzie • Patricia Cameron • Janice Fialka

#### **Critical Issues Brief: Concerns About the Proliferation of One-to-One Paraprofessionals**

Michael F. Giangreco; UVM; Center on Disability and Community Inclusion; Burlington, VT

#### **One-to-One Paraprofessionals for Students With Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms: Is Conventional Wisdom Wrong?**

Michael F. Giangreco; UVM; Center on Disability and Community Inclusion; Burlington, VT

#### **Paraprofessionals - No Perfect Solution**

Michael F. Giangreco and Stephen M. Broer

#### **Paraprofessionals: The “Sous-Chefs” of Literacy Instruction**

Julie N. Causton-Theoharis  
Michael F. Giangreco  
Mary Beth Doyl  
Patricia F. Vadas

## **SECTION II: Resources authored by other experts and/or agencies**

Effective Use of Teacher Assistants (TAs) – What is research saying? – February 2010

Rhode Island Technical Assistance Project

[http://www.ritap.org/ta/resources/resources\\_effective.php](http://www.ritap.org/ta/resources/resources_effective.php)

Guidelines for the Training, Use, and Supervision of Speech-Language Pathology Assistants

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2004)

[www.asha.org/policy](http://www.asha.org/policy)

Learning Disabilities: Use of Paraprofessionals

National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1998)

[http://www.ldonline.org/article/Learning\\_Disabilities%3A\\_Use\\_of\\_Paraprofessionals](http://www.ldonline.org/article/Learning_Disabilities%3A_Use_of_Paraprofessionals)

Paraprofessional Services for Students with Disabilities: A Legal Analysis of Issues

<http://www.uvm.edu>

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*Dr. Giangreco is currently the Project Director for Project Evolve Plus. This project offers school-based research, training, technical assistance, and collaborative consultation on fee-for-service basis through the Center on Disability & Community Inclusion at the University of Vermont (UVM). Project EVOLVE Plus extends the earlier work of Project EVOLVE (2002 - 2007), a federally-funded model demonstration project that explored alternatives to overreliance on paraprofessionals to support students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. The Plus has been added because this service addresses additional topical areas that have been field-tested and researched by project staff*

## Appendix B

### Paraprofessional Support

General supports refer to supplementary aids and services that are necessary to ensure each child with a disability's access to, participation and progress in the general education curriculum. When determined necessary by the student's IEP team, a paraprofessional may be assigned to assist with the provision of general supports.

Below are six categories of general supports that may be recommended for a student (Giangreco, Cloninger & Iverson, 1998):

1. Personal Needs (e.g., food, catheterization or medication)
2. Physical Needs (e.g., repositioned at least hourly; leg braces adjusted and checked)
3. Teaching Others About the Student (e.g., teach staff and classmates about the student's augmentative communication system and communicate behaviors; teach staff seizure management procedures, specialized evacuation procedures, and behavioral or health crises management procedures)
4. Sensory Needs (e.g., FM unit/auditory trainer; tactile materials; large print materials)
5. Providing Access and Opportunities (e.g., environmental modifications; access to co-curricular activities; access to materials in the student's native language; instructional accommodations to general education activities and materials prepared in advance to facilitate multi-level instruction and curriculum overlapping; or computer access)
6. Other General Supports (e.g., those not clearly addressed in any other category; class notes recorded; extended time to complete tasks; ensure collaborative teamwork among general and special educators; or regular communication with the family).