



Fast Fact (April 2010)

Paraprofessionals: Instructional Team Members

In Virginia, there are no state certification or licensing requirements for paraprofessionals. There is, however, a state requirement for local educational agencies (LEA) when employing paraprofessionals, which requires all paraprofessionals to have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

Additionally, the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind Act, "NCLB")* of 2001, has specific requirements for Title I schools and programs. Any paraprofessional who provides instructional assistance in a program supported with Title I, Part A, funds must meet certain requirements and be deemed highly qualified. In order to meet the "highly qualified" requirement, paraprofessionals hired after January 2002, working in an instructional capacity in a program supported with Title I, Part A, funds, must meet one of the following options:

- Complete two years of study at an institution of higher education;
- Obtain an associate's (or higher) degree; or
- Meet a rigorous standard of quality through a formal state or local academic assessment covering reading, writing, and mathematics.

Instructional assistance includes providing one-to-one tutoring, assisting with classroom management, providing instructional assistance in a computer lab, conducting parent involvement activities, serving as translators, or providing instructional support under the direct supervision of a teacher. Non-instructional individuals, such as those who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are not required to meet the NCLB Title I "highly qualified" requirements, but must have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* requires paraprofessionals and assistants to be appropriately trained and supervised when they assist in the provision of special education and related services. The LEA should provide for the training and supervision of paraprofessionals. The Virginia Department of Education encourages LEAs to use the NCLB highly qualified standards for paraprofessionals in all schools.

For more information:

For guidelines, refer to *Virginia Paraprofessional Guide to Support and Collaborate with Paraprofessionals, July 2005* and *Staff Development Series for Paraprofessionals* at <http://ttaonline.org>.

Virginia Department of Education Web site: www.doe.virginia.gov or contact Division of Special Education and Student Services at 804-225-2932, 1-800-422-2083, Text users dial 711 (Virginia Relay)