



# December 2009 Update for District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues



The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors.

Paraprofessionals play important roles in improving student achievement. To this end, the No Child Left Behind Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act state that paraprofessionals are to be appropriately trained and supervised. The Connecticut State Department of Education has developed a website to provide resources for paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators to understand the appropriate training, supervision, and evaluation of paraprofessionals.

[www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali)

The following resources are available on this website:

- Title I Paraprofessional Requirements;
- Connecticut Paraprofessional Legislation including minutes from the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Meetings;
- Professional Development Opportunities across the State;
- Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals;
- Assessment Checklist for Paraprofessionals;
- Teacher Supervisory Checklist;
- Frequently Asked Questions About Paraprofessionals;
- Paraprofessional Overview of CALI (Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative) Training Materials;
- District Contact for Paraprofessional Issues Newsletter; and
- Research studies on the link between paraprofessionals and student achievement.

## Paraprofessionals and Instructional Support

“The U.S. Department of Education states that paraprofessionals provide instructional support, but they should not provide planned direct instruction or introduce students to new skills, concepts or academic content (2004, Title I Paraprofessionals: Non-Regulatory Guidance). To clarify, paraprofessionals should not teach students anything that has not been taught in the school’s curriculum by the certified teacher.

The above guidance should be used to support paraprofessionals as they work with teachers in the classroom to help all students. A paraprofessional may provide review to a small group while the certified teacher provides instruction to the whole class, or the teacher may lead a small group in a discussion to enhance their learning while the paraprofessional reinforces the content that has already been taught.

Assuming that the paraprofessional has been appropriately trained and is under the supervision of a certified teacher, it is an appropriate and effective use of paraprofessional to provide instruction that is not new to the class, a group of students or a single child. Instruction should be delivered based on the plans of the certified teacher. Paraprofessionals in many instances can provide personal insight based on their years of experience and can also make connections to a topic that will enhance the teacher’s plans.

Paraprofessionals should be part of a team that recognizes that all students can learn. The certified teacher should have training in the principles of teaching and learning that emphasize scaffolding teaching and supports, fostering independence, data collection and strategies for student engagement, ensuring the paraprofessional will also receive proper training leading to more effective use of their support.”

Taken from *The Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals*, available online at: [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines\\_paraprofessionals.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines_paraprofessionals.pdf).

**The CSDE along with SERC has finalized a frequently asked questions document to answer common questions that educators have regarding paraprofessionals. In each update, we will include one question and its answer. The full document can be downloaded from the CSDE Paraprofessional Information and Resources page: [www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali).**

### What is the paraprofessional’s role in Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)?

SRBI is *Connecticut’s Framework for Response to Intervention (RTI)*, a process used to determine if and how students respond to instruction, including social/emotional learning. RTI provides a framework for school teams for designing, implementing, and evaluating educational interventions in a timely manner. Collaboration among all school staff ensures positive learning experiences and outcomes for struggling students whose needs are identified early. Paraprofessionals can be a valuable part of SRBI teams by assisting classroom teachers and special educators with screening, assisting teachers with benchmarking and progress monitoring assessments, recording observations of behavior and learning strategies, entering assessment data into a management system, serving as a member of the intervention team, collaborating with teachers to provide support for students, implementing interventions, and participating in school-wide professional development.



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**A Problem-Solving Exercise:** Each month, we will provide a case study and discussion questions to facilitate discussion among teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

Gary, a school paraprofessional, and Natasha, the paraprofessional with whom he has worked for years, have had a major disagreement. Gary frequently leaves class and allows her to take over. Natasha has told Gary that this is inappropriate and she will report him to the Administration. Gary tells Natasha that she is being disloyal and others do it regularly. Natasha feels it is bad for the students and she feels uncomfortable when Gary is not there.

### **Situation Discussion Questions:**

1. Where does loyalty fit into a relationship, and what really constitutes loyalty?
2. What if Natasha frequently left the room? Is it as serious a problem?
3. What will happen to this instructional team if Natasha follows through on her decision to report her concerns about him frequently leaving the class?
4. Can and should it be settled between Gary and Natasha and never reported to the administration?

### **Substitute Teachers Without Bachelor's Degrees**

A new law, Public Act 09-01, was just passed in this last legislative session that requires substitute teachers to hold a Bachelor's Degree (BA). Public Act 09-01 was amended on Friday, October 2, 2009, through Public Act 09-06 of the June special session to allow substitute teachers without Bachelor's Degrees to work in assignments lasting 10 days or less for the 2009-2010 school year. Therefore, for this school year only:

1. A paraprofessional that does not hold a BA may serve as a substitute teacher for up to 10 days;
2. Paraprofessionals that hold a BA may serve without an authorization for up to 40 days in the same assignment; or
3. If the person holding a BA will be serving in the same assignment for more than 40 days, they must apply and be authorized to serve as a long-term substitute.

*For more information regarding this requirement, please contact the Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification at 860-713-6969, or by email at: [teacher.cert@ct.gov](mailto:teacher.cert@ct.gov).*

### **Evaluations for Paraprofessionals**

Evaluations of paraprofessionals should be completed by an administrator who has the necessary credentials to evaluate personnel. Evaluations should be completed for paraprofessionals at a minimum of once per year. Input from the supervisor who works on a daily basis with the paraprofessional is helpful to the evaluator, as he or she may not see the paraprofessional in their capacity as frequently. The evaluation process and tools should be developed in conjunction with the job description and be based on the competencies required for the position.

It is important that the evaluation process be seen as one way in which feedback can be elicited from the paraprofessional, as well as provided by the evaluator. This process should help to identify the training needs of individual paraprofessionals, as well as the patterns of training needs that emerge as a result of evaluating all paraprofessionals at a building level. Subsequently, it is the role of the evaluator to ensure that each paraprofessional's training needs are met. Just as with certified teachers, it is appropriate to evaluate needs of a paraprofessional, provide the appropriate training and monitor the implementation of that training. When evaluations are performed in this manner, it is fair to both parties and also sets a positive tone and creates an environment conducive to adult learning.

*The Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals document contains evaluations. The Guidelines can be downloaded from the CSDE Paraprofessional Information and Resources page at: [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines\\_paraprofessionals.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines_paraprofessionals.pdf).*