

ESSA Quick Reference Brief: Paraprofessional Requirements under Title I-A

Paraprofessionals play a critical role in supporting students and educators. Whether providing tutoring, translation support, small group instruction, playground or lunchroom supervision, paraprofessionals bring immeasurable value to schools and the education students receive.

What the Law Says

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to ensure that all paraprofessionals working in a program supported with funds under Title I, Part A meet applicable State certification requirements.¹ In addition, schools and districts must follow the requirements under [34 CFR §200.58](#) which include the following:

- Paraprofessionals must be 18 years old and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent.

In addition, a paraprofessional working in a Title I-A program must meet one or more of the following requirements²:

- Two years of study at an institution of higher education; **or**
- An Associate's (or higher) degree; **or**
- Meeting a rigorous standard of quality and demonstrate through a formal state, or local academic assessment or para-educator certificate program, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing:
 - Reading, writing, and mathematics; or
 - Reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.



Qualifications for paraprofessionals supporting students in special education can be found in [Section 300.156](#) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

What it Means

Districts must follow [Oregon Administrative Rules](#), which describe the requirements for all paraprofessionals in Oregon, including those employed in Title I-A programs. The requirements apply to **all paraprofessionals providing instructional support in a schoolwide program**, without regard to whether the position is funded with Federal, State, or local funds. In a targeted assistance program, the requirements apply to all **paraprofessionals providing instructional support who are paid with Title I-A funds**, but not to paraprofessionals paid with State or local funds. These requirements apply to paraprofessionals employed (even if only for a portion of the day) in Title I-A programs. These requirements must be met at the time paraprofessionals are hired.³

Defining "Paraprofessional"

ESSA defines a paraprofessional as an **individual with instructional duties** who does not hold the position of teacher, but assists in the classroom under the guidance of an appropriately licensed teacher. Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care

¹ ESEA Section 1111(g)(2)(J)

² OAR 581-037-0006

³ ESEA Section 1111(g)(2)(M)

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services, and non-instructional computer assistance, are not considered to be instructional paraprofessionals under ESSA and are not required to meet the Title I-A requirement. In Oregon, the terms “paraprofessional”, “educational assistant” and “instructional assistant” have the same meaning.⁴

It is important to note that paraprofessionals must work under the supervision of and within close and frequent proximity to a licensed teacher.⁵

Methods for Meeting Qualifications

OAR 581-022-0006 describes three ways in which paraprofessionals can demonstrate qualifications:

- *Two Years of Higher Education*
“Two years of study” at an institution is defined by the institution of higher education rather than the State educational agency. The credits do not have to be specific to education, and a particular course of study is not required.
- *An Associate’s Degree*
An Associate’s Degree is a degree granted after a two-year course of study, generally by a community college. The law specifically states that a higher-level degree (i.e.; Bachelor’s Degree) also meets the requirements.
- *Passing a State or Local Assessment*
Districts have flexibility in determining the content and format of a local assessment of paraprofessionals. The law does not require a paper and pencil test, so while an appropriate assessment might be entirely a written test, it could be a combination of a written test on content (reading, writing, and math) and a demonstration of competence in instruction (assessed through observations via a series of rubrics).

The content of the assessment should reflect both the academic standards and skills expected of a student at a given school level (preschool, elementary, middle, or high school), and the ability of the individual to effectively provide instructional support to assist students in mastering the content. The assessment must be valid and reliable, and a record should be kept of an individual’s performance on that assessment.

Notice to families of right to request information

Districts are required to inform families that federal law gives them the right to request specific information about the professional qualifications of the educators supporting their children. This includes the right to request the qualification of paraprofessionals.⁶ Districts can find parent notification forms in multiple languages on ODE’s [Parent/Guardian Notification Letters web page](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is considered a “Title I-A” paraprofessional?

For the purposes of Title I, Part A, a paraprofessional is an employee who provides “instructional support”⁷ in a program supported with Title I-A funds. This includes those who:

⁴ OAR 581-037-0005

⁵ OAR 581-037-0015

⁶ ESEA Section 1112(e)(1)(A)(iii)

⁷ ESEA Section 1119(g)(2) of NCLB

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- provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a certified teacher,
- assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials,
- provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory,
- provide instructional support in a library or media center,
- conduct parental involvement activities, or
- act as a translator.

Individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, and similar positions are not considered paraprofessionals under Title I-A.

2. How do these requirements apply to paraprofessionals in a schoolwide program?

The requirements apply to **all paraprofessionals providing instructional support** in a schoolwide program, without regard to whether the position is funded with Federal, State, or local funds.

3. How do these requirements apply to paraprofessionals in a targeted assistance program?

In a targeted assistance program, the requirements apply to all **paraprofessionals providing instructional support who are paid with Title I-A funds**, but not to paraprofessionals paid with State or local funds.

4. Must paraprofessionals employed by a district to deliver or support the delivery of Title I equitable services meet any qualification requirements?

Yes. ESEA section 1111(g)(2)(M) requires each State to ensure that districts and schools continue to comply with the paraprofessional qualifications in place on December 9, 2015, including those requirements under 34 C.F.R. § 200.58 and any State-specific requirements that were in place on that date.

5. What are the requirements for the supervision of paraprofessionals?

Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support must work under the direct supervision of a licensed teacher. A paraprofessional works under the direct supervision of a teacher if (1) the teacher prepares the lessons, plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carries out, and evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working, and (2) the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher.

6. Must a paraprofessional employed by a district to provide equitable services do so under the direct supervision of a public school teacher?

As required by OAR 581-037-0005 (5) Title I-A funds cannot be used to hire a paraprofessional for equitable services to support a private school teacher, regardless of whether or not the private school teacher is licensed. Title I-A funds can only be used to hire a paraprofessional for equitable services to support a licensed public school teacher.

Resources

- [Title I-A Paraprofessional Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)
- [Title I-A Equitable Services Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)
- [Transitioning to the Every Student Succeeds Act: FAQs](#)
- [Oregon Administrative Rules for Educational Assistants](#)
- [Parent/Guardian Notification Letters](#)