



TERRY BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JASON E. GLASS, DIRECTOR

TO: AEA Directors, School District Superintendents, and School District Principals
FROM: Judy Jeffrey, Director, and George Maurer, Executive Director, Iowa Board of Educational Examiners
DATE: December 18, 2009 (Updated, May 2013)
RE: Paraeducator Service Parameters

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) has received multiple inquiries regarding parameters of service provision for those individuals who hold a teaching license and are employed as paraeducators (paraprofessionals, associates, etc.) in school settings. This memorandum is intended to clarify requirements regarding paraeducator roles and services in PK-12 school settings.

The DE, in partnership with the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE), emphasizes that all paraeducator roles are governed by information that districts provide regarding positions and assignments in the Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS). Paraeducators are entered into the BEDS system as non-licensed personnel. An individual listed in a non-licensed position cannot provide services that call for licensed personnel. If a paraeducator who holds a teaching license provides teaching services, that individual's position must be reported as a licensed personnel position in the BEDS as required by the BOEE code on accurate state reporting [282—25.3(3)b(272)].

Additionally, federal and state laws prohibit special education paraeducators or paraeducators whose positions are supported by Title I funds from providing direct instructional services. The Iowa Rules of Special Education specifically require paraprofessionals to “work under the supervision of professional personnel who are appropriately authorized to provide direct services in the same area where the paraprofessional provides assistive services” [Iowa Rules of Special Education 281—41.403 Paraprofessionals]. The only exception to that rule is for a paraeducator who holds a substitute authorization. Such an authorization allows a paraeducator to substitute during a teacher's absence only in the special education classroom in which the paraeducator is employed [282—14.143(272)]. Under Title I requirements, paraprofessionals “may not provide any instructional service to a student unless the paraprofessional is working under the direct supervision of a teacher” [Title I, section 1119 (g) (2)]. These federal and state requirements cannot be monitored without accurate reporting of licensed and non-licensed personnel assignments.

Because individuals employed as paraeducators do not have access to teacher staff development opportunities, teacher schedules, teacher team meetings, and other professional components of teacher employment, the Iowa Department of Education strongly discourages the practice of hiring individuals as paraeducators and allowing them to teach if they hold a teaching license. The practice allows individuals without appropriate professional support to provide professional services.

If you have questions regarding paraeducator services and roles, please contact Marietta Rives, DE consultant for paraeducator services, at 515-281-6038 or marietta.rives@iowa.gov.