



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Bureau of Special Education Communication

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Topic: School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Recommendations

This communication is to provide information to you regarding recommendations of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council ("Council") as required by Public Act No. 13-10. The Council has met on a quarterly basis to advise the Commissioner of Education of the needs for professional development and training of paraprofessionals and the effectiveness of the content and the delivery of existing training for such paraprofessionals, appropriate staffing strategies for paraprofessionals and other relevant issues relating to paraprofessionals.

The Council recommended that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) should continue its efforts to publicize resources available to schools and districts, on the effective evaluation, support and training of Paraeducators. The maintenance of the District Contacts for Paraeducators and the revised Paraeducator Information and Resources page located at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321752> has made these resources more accessible. The CSDE maintains a contact list that is updated in January of each year. The district contact person who is responsible for disseminating information regarding paraeducators including professional learning opportunities, State Paraeducator of the Year program, and any relevant topics regarding paraeducators will be the district's Director of Special Education and Pupil Services. The CSDE is encouraging these resources to be utilized by building administrators.

The CSDE has explored how to integrate these resources in to existing leadership development programming. Currently the "Effective Paraeducator Supervision" training is provided as a component of the "Seven Day Leadership Series" provided by The State Education Resource Center (SERC). Additionally, in the summer of 2015 the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) provided a two day symposium titled "Management and Supervision of Paraeducators in Connecticut."

The CSDE supports the recommendation that districts train all of their paraeducators on the appropriate roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Connecticut *Guidelines for the Training and Support of Paraprofessionals*. The CSDE adopted these roles and responsibilities from the National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP). The NRCP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to share information about policy questions, regulatory procedures, and training modules that will enable administrators and staff development to improve the recruitment, supervision and career development of paraeducators. For each of the six responsibilities, this model describes the scope of responsibilities and the knowledge and skills needed by the

paraeducator to perform these responsibilities as they work with students, particularly students with disabilities. National information and resources are located at <http://www.nrcpara.org>.

In 2013, the UCEDD conducted a Professional Development Needs Assessment for Paraeducators. Responses were received from 2,438 paraeducators working in public schools in Connecticut. Twenty percent of the paraeducators reported not receiving any training in the previous 12 months. The majority of paraeducators that responded, indicated that they desired training on behavior management. Training for Paraeducators on behavior management should include de-escalation strategies. As a member of the school team, the paraeducator may have a role in classroom behavior management for particular students. These paraeducators should have access to behavior intervention plans and have an understanding of the individualized education program (IEP) information that is pertinent to their role as an implementer. In an effort to address the increasing responsibilities of the paraeducator workforce on the inclusion of students with moderate to severe learning and behavioral challenges, the CT UCEDD will be surveying the training needs of paraeducators to plan training workshops. Please be on the lookout for this survey to be distributed to paraeducators in your district in the near future.

Information about professional learning opportunities for paraeducators may be found at the UCEDD website at http://www.uconnucedd.org/pdfs/PARA_training_flyer_2-2014.pdf and the SERC website at <http://www.ctserc.org/index.php/paraprofessionals-as-partners>. The Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) offers The COMPASS, a comprehensive, job-embedded development curriculum aligned with national and state paraeducator standards, with five basic and 16 advanced modules. Some session topics include: Roles and Responsibilities, Connecting Instruction to Common Core Standards, and School Climate: Creating Environments that are Safe for All. Educational organizations can hire CREC to present within districts or CREC can certify staff members to teach The COMPASS, enabling capacity building within your organization. Professionals can become certified to train paraeducators in more than twenty COMPASS modules such as School Climate, Instructional Strategies, Managing Behaviors and Common Core Standards. Please visit the link at <http://www.crec.org/find.php?s=t77>. Information is also available at the CSDE website at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321752>.

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