

Shasta Union High School District



PARAPROFESSIONAL HANDBOOK

*Alone we can do so little;
TOGETHER we can do so much*

-Helen Keller

Nov 14, 2023

Contents:

Page:	Topic:
3	Introduction
3	Role as a Paraprofessional at SUHSD
3	What is an IEP? What is a 504?
4	Daily Duties
4	How to Support Students
5	School Schedule
5	Personal Schedule
5	Personal Lunch and Break Time
5	Attendance and Absences
6	Mandated Reporting
6	Responsibilities
7	Expectations
8	Paras As Role Models
9	Student Lunches and Breaks:
9	Prompt Hierarchy
10	1:1 Aides
10	Sensory Needs
10	Rewards and Consequences
10	Behavior Plans
11	Inclusion (LRE)
12	Access Labs
12	About The Classroom
13	Student Health Plans
13	Para Resources
13	Conclusion

Introduction

Welcome to the Shasta Union High School District. SUHSD serves a diverse population of students at each of its school sites. We pride ourselves on recruiting quality classified staff to serve students in a multitude of capacities. Classified employees and the duties they perform are an integral part of our District in providing valuable services to students both directly and indirectly.

Please refer to this handbook to guide you in understanding the role and responsibilities of a Paraprofessional.

Role as Paraprofessional at Shasta Union High School District

Here at SUHSD, you are a valued member of our educational team. Your primary role, in short, is to support student learning. All adults on a school campus are “teachers” of students and play an important part in their education. You will be working under the direction of a professional faculty member, and under the supervision of your site or program administrator.

We have many different types of paraprofessionals in our district with varying job descriptions. This handbook is for general information. Please read through your specific job description and consult with your teacher or administrator for more information and details.

What is an IEP? What is a 504 Plan?

What are these and why does it matter?

An IEP, or Individualized Educational Plan is a very important document. As the title suggests, this document is an educational plan developed as a collaborative effort between school teachers, psychologists, therapists, and parents and is individualized to each student’s unique needs. It is also a legally binding contract between the school and the student and parents.

The IEP itself is a detailed document which highlights the challenges the individual student may encounter due to their qualifying disability while in the school setting. Members of the IEP team will discuss the results of tests performed on the student and set goals for them to work toward during the calendar year. The IEP acts like a passport in providing the student with a disability a fair and equal opportunity to an education.

A 504 plan is similar to an IEP in that it addresses the needs of students with qualifying disabling conditions.

What does this have to do with you??

The IEP/504 has a lot to do with you since you will be a contributor in ensuring modifications and accommodations students are entitled to, as set out in their IEP, are being applied or made available to them.

This could include but not be limited to:

- Ensuring electronic and other assistive devices are made available to the student That the student is granted extended time on tests
- That notes are scribed or are provided for the student
- Ensuring the student's personal toileting needs are met
- Reading out loud for the student

In general, the paraprofessional acts as a liaison between the student and educational staff as well as a provider of certain kinds of services under the direction of a qualified professional.

Daily Duties

Daily duties vary with position types and classrooms.

- **Meet with your assigned teachers and discuss your daily duties.**

How to Support Students

The job of a paraprofessional is to promote independence in the students they work with through assisting them in mastering the skills necessary to become independent learners.

A paraprofessional should:

- Be engaged and proactive in class (no personal use of cellphones, reading books, doing crossword puzzles, or ear buds. If you need to use a phone or be excused in an emergency, let the teacher know.).
- Be visible and approachable (move around and circulate the class making yourself available to all students).
- Know your students (be aware of their IEPs and related documents and their accommodations and modifications).
- Build relationships with **ALL** students
- Promote independent learning (Don't do student's work for them).
- Respect student's efforts through words of encouragement and frequent praise.

- Personal Devices in the classroom may only be used for emergency purposes or legitimate job-related communication with teachers or administrators
- Support student growth, safety, and well-being.

School Schedule

Please see the attached school schedule and school map.

Personal Schedule

My schedule is from: _____

You will be given your class schedule by the Department Chair and Site Secretary of your school site. You should follow it by arriving at class on time and not leaving before the bell rings. Your site Department Chair will provide you with a list of specific duties which can be carried out during the student lunch period when there are no classes in session and on minimum days.

Duties may include but not limited to:

- Shredding confidential papers for Special Education teachers
- Making copies for Special Education teachers
- Updating Academic Lab binders
- Prepping for classes (studying class materials)
- Filing (IEP files)
- Supervising students (by direction of the teacher)

Unless otherwise directed, Paras should be in attendance at all school rallies and other assemblies. Your schedule may also be modified on minimum days to meet the needs of the students.

Lunch and Break Time:

You will be provided personal breaks and lunch times according to legal and district requirements. These should be included in your daily schedule.

Attendance and Absences

If you are going to be absent, please give as much notice as possible to your school site. Emailing the School Site Secretary and the Department Chair (in one email) to let them know of

your absence will suffice. They will take care of finding coverage for you. **Also, email other teachers that you work with so that they may plan for your absence.**

Should you need to leave your position at any time during the school day, inform the Department Chair and School Site Secretary when you will be leaving and when you are returning. You also must verbally notify the classroom teacher if you are leaving your duty.

You will be issued with 11 time cards at the start of the school year. Record all absences on your monthly time card and turn it into the school site secretary at the end of each month. It is necessary to sign the front and back of the time cards.

If you are assigned as a 1:1 para during the day and your student is absent, let the Department Chair know and they will give you other duties for the day.

Mandated Reporting

It is your duty and responsibility to report to the proper authorities if you suspect child abuse or neglect. Some of our students are also adults.

Every District employee must complete an online Mandated Reporter training, annually. You will receive an email with an attached link.

To make a mandated report, you need to complete and submit these forms:

<https://oag.ca.gov/childabuse/forms>

You must also call and speak with someone at Children Services or Adult Protective Services. It is critical that you are as specific as possible in your reports. We have to be the eyes and ears for Social Services. **Please notify the site administrator after filing reports.**

Children's Services : (530) 225-5650

Adult Protective Services: (530) 225-5798

Responsibilities:

General duties of a paraprofessional:

- Take notes
- Collect any handouts given
- Maintain daily planner for each class

- Get information to academic Labs quickly and efficiently
- Request an invite to join Google Classrooms of all classes you are in
- Carry supplies of paper, pencils and highlighters, binders
- Collect data as directed

Duties to students:

- Assist students by making sure they have all the supplies needed.
- Check that students have understood teacher directions. Repeat, rephrase, explain as necessary.
- Check for student understanding of the lesson and materials.
- Work with students individually or in small groups as needed or directed. Encourage students to self advocate by asking for help and seeking support from their teachers.
- Ensure students with IEPs or 504s are receiving accommodations and modifications
- Supervise students and maintain classroom and school behavioral expectations
- Report serious student behavior and inappropriate activities to site administrators

Duties to teachers:

- Support the teachers so that they can achieve their goals in the classroom. Work as a collaborative team.
- Meet with your teacher to clarify expectations and your role in the classroom and to ask questions and receive feedback and guidance.
- Report concerns about student learning or other issues to teachers.
- Please see attached job description for more specific information.

Expectations

As a paraprofessional, you are expected to:

- Support and implement all academic and behavior plans throughout all settings.
- Reinforce positive behavior throughout the day and implement consequences when needed.
- Assist with setup and cleanup of each activity each day.
- Prep materials when we are down staff or students are working independently, or as directed.

- Maintain all classroom routines and behavioral expectations when the teacher is out of the room.
- Abide by school rules just as the students are. Remember, we must always model appropriate behavior.
- Report serious or concerning student behavior to your site administrator.
- Comply with all applicable Shasta Union High School District Board Policies. Pay specific attention to Policy 4040: Employee use of Technology and Policy 4119.24 Maintain Appropriate Adult-Student Interactions.
<https://www.suhsd.net/Board/Mission-Vision-and-Policies/index.html>
- Direct parents with questions or concerns to the professional responsible for addressing this - their student's teacher or site administrator. Notify the teacher or administrator of the parent's concerns.
- Maintain student confidentiality. If approached in the community, remember you are a district employee and representative to the public. Always direct people to the appropriate person who can help them.
- You are a mandated reporter. It is YOUR responsibility and legal obligation to report suspected abuse to social services. Do not assume someone else is doing it.
- Follow district and site procedures for reporting absences and taking leave.

Paras are Role Models!

YOU are the number one role model for our students. ***YOU*** spend the whole day with them and they look up to you. Remember to always put your best foot forward from the moment you step into the classroom until the second the students leave for the day. Model positive behavior, model working through problems, model things how you deal with things that might upset you in a calm and courteous, productive manner.

Be aware that as a school employee, you have a position of authority with students and should conduct yourself as such. Demonstrate caution and good judgment when interacting with students. Be aware that "friending" or interacting on social media outside of legitimate school business can create the appearance of impropriety and should be avoided.

*Every moment is a learning moment, don't miss out on incidental teaching, otherwise known as the
"TEACHABLE MOMENTS!"*

Student Lunch and Breaks - Opportunities to Build Social Skills

There is no real down-time during the instructional day while with students. Student lunch and break times may present opportunities to support students in acquiring social skills and developing positive peer relationships. Invite them to sit with peers, prompt them if necessary in a manner that is most discrete and allow them to make choices. Respect their autonomy as individuals. Do NOT open containers, packets, or bags; help with money; or tie shoes without ASKING first. Encourage independence and self-advocacy and always use the prompting guidelines. Remember to take data if necessary for a student's plan.

Prompt Hierarchy

Full Physical (FP)

Hand over hand

Partial Physical (PP)

Touching only wrist, elbow, shoulder

Visual Prompt (VisP)

Modeling (M)

Demonstration

Gestural (G)

Pointing, mouthing, gestures

Verbal Prompt (VP)

Giving a verbal direction

Partial Verbal (PV)

Giving the beginning of a word or phrase

Independent (I)

Student is completely independent

Sensory Needs

Some of our students have sensory needs or “sensory diets” which means a menu of sensory activities during the day. Consult with your teacher for guidance with addressing student sensory needs.

We utilize weighted vests, fidgets, seat disks, and other sensory-supporting items as recommended or needed with students.

Rewards & Consequences

We have many types of reward systems in our classrooms. Consult with the classroom teacher to learn about their behavioral management plan. Keep in mind that every child has different needs and not everyone is addressed in exactly the same way.

With that said, in our classrooms, we also implement consequences when needed. Consequences are a natural part of life and an aspect of our society.

Behavior Plans

Many students have individualized behavior plans also known as BIPs. As staff, we need to implement these plans every minute of every day. Please read each Behavior Plan as applicable to the students you serve. IEP teachers or school psychologists can provide you with these.

Reminder: Behavior Plans are confidential information.

Health Plans

Some students may have individual health plans. IEP teachers and/or the school nurse can provide you with these.

Reminder, these plans hold confidential information.

1:1 Aides /Independence Facilitators

Some of our paras are assigned to a student for 1:1 support. A 1:1 aide's responsibility is **NOT** to do everything for the student, but to assist them in accomplishing tasks by supporting the development of skills that build student independence.

Instead of telling students what they need or should do all the time, get in the habit of asking guiding questions:

Ex: What did we need out yesterday? What do we always need out of every day? Look around class and see what others have out ready. Another strategy is to have the student create an index card for each period which you can direct them to look at, at the start of each period, or you could place it on the desk at the start of each period. Assist students in figuring out and developing their own organizational system.

During class, direct the student to complete tasks, and redirect them if their focus is elsewhere. Offer frequent praise to encourage continuation of desired behaviors.

Some students aren't able to focus on what is being said in class while they are writing at the same time. It is important to support them with the information they might miss in this process. You are an extra set of eyes and ears.

Should your student be busy working independently and you find yourself not required by them momentarily, walk around the classroom and observe other students working and see if you can be of assistance to them at all. Sometimes when a student has a 1:1 aide, it can alienate them from the rest of the class. As a 1:1 aide, you should help your student to build relationships with other students so they develop positive peer relationships. Encourage them to include your student in group activities or acknowledge them just in passing.

Be alert, be proactive, and remain engaged at all times.

Inclusion (LRE)

Supporting our students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is what makes them the most successful. Without your support, we will see behaviors, communication breakdown, and off task behavior. Use the supports designated for each student, follow the Behavior Plan (BIP), and give positive reinforcement EVERY chance you can.

Get to know your students and work on developing strategies which will assist in avoiding unacceptable behaviors in class before they happen.

All students are different and what works for one, may not work for another. Your job is to continually work on developing strategies which are tailored to the student's individual needs as they present themselves. This can be achieved by remaining vigilant, documenting successes and seeking outside resources where necessary, such as collaborating with the teacher, the student's case carrier, and other members of staff.

Some students aren't able to focus on what is being said in class while they are writing at the same time. Again, you are their extra eyes and ears. If ***you*** don't know what is going on in the classroom, you will not be able to assist the student in what they need to do. Taking your own notes will be helpful to all students that pass through Access S classes.

As you are in a classroom, pay attention and collect all information regarding what was done in class, what's becoming due, test, and quiz dates, and handouts and relay this to the Access S teachers.

Keeping a daily calendar for each class with what students worked on each day is also a good strategy to be able to know what was done. It will be helpful in the event of a student absence or if a student missed some information.

A paraprofessional's responsibility is not simply to just be in the classroom, but to be engaged in supporting students who need help and be aware that those who need the most help will not necessarily ask directly for it. In fact, many students avoid others knowing that they struggle and engage in behaviors to deflect from their weaknesses. Others just try to remain low profile and "fly under the radar." A plan to check in with all students in a class is a strategy to help students not feel singled-out. Don't wait for students to ask for help, they might never do so.

Access Labs

Both Special Education and General Education students pass through Access Labs daily. The intended purpose of Access Labs is for students to get extra support in the completion of assignments and to be tutored on topics and concepts they may need extra help in understanding.

The role of the para in an Access S class is to work one on one with small groups of students working on the same assignment. The para should encourage students in developing good study habits through being organized and monitoring their grades.

The Access S teacher will oversee the class and direct paras which students they should work with on a daily basis.

About the Classroom

For general education classes, consult with the teacher for more information and a course syllabus as well as guidance for how you can support them and their students.

Para Resources

You may be assigned a para mentor. Your mentor will have at least two years of experience as a para to share with you over a two week initial training period.

It would be an impossible task to address in this handbook, every scenario which may present itself on the day of a para but should you need guidance, your mentor would be the first person to go to.

If your mentor is unable to help you with something, they will refer you to the Department Chair of Special Education.

Other school based resources:

- School Psychologist
- School Counselor
- School Site Secretary
- Administration
- Members of the faculty

Student Health Plans:

Oftentimes students have individualized health plans to address specific medical needs. These are developed by District nurses who coordinate with the student's doctor to develop them.

It is your responsibility to be aware of and adhere to any health plans that may impact the students you work with. Health plans can address student needs related to allergies, seizures, medication protocols, and a variety of other circumstances. Check with the teachers of the classrooms you work in and with the IEP Case Carrier, as applicable, to learn if there are any health related plans you should be made aware of.

Conclusion:

Welcome to the wonderful work of public education in the Shasta Union High School District. We are excited that you have joined our team.

Nobody will expect you to know everything on your first day, or even your last ... the job of a para remains in a state of permanent flux in order to meet the unique and individual needs of each and every student as they present themselves on a daily basis.

Your school site and district administration team wants you to be successful in your role with us. School administrators see themselves as support for their faculty and staff. So, if you need something, or have a question, step forward and ask!

Always remember - you are not alone. We appreciate you and what you do for our students!