

Utah Paraprofessional Consortium

Mission Statement

The mission of the Utah Paraprofessional Consortium is to promote training and support for paraprofessionals, leading to improved outcomes for children, youth and families.

To accomplish this mission:

We encourage the Utah State Office of Education to:

- Define a continuum of roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals.
- Allocate and align resources to promote career development and professional development activities for paraprofessionals.
- Support preservice and inservice efforts that address the needs of instructional team members responsible for training and supervising paraprofessionals.

We encourage school districts and other state and local agencies to:

- Implement a continuum of defined roles and responsibilities for paraprofessionals to meet school, family and community needs.
- Coordinate resources to promote career development and professional development activities for paraprofessionals.
- Provide staff development to address the needs of instructional team members responsible for training and supervising paraprofessionals.

We encourage paraprofessionals to:

- Understand and work within individual roles and responsibilities as defined by their supervisor(s).
- Take advantage of professional development and life long learning opportunities.
- Develop self-advocacy skills.

Objective 1: Promote a broad array of professional development activities to meet the needs of paraprofessionals.

Strategies:

- Identify and pursue sources for funding professional development.
- Develop and coordinate opportunities for paraprofessionals to access training as required by federal, state, and district policies.
- Promote statewide comprehensive systems of training for paraprofessional career development.
- Encourage districts and agencies to recognize and document paraprofessionals' level of training and work experience.
- Encourage paraprofessionals to document their work and training experiences through use of a portfolio.

Objective 2: Promote a broad array of activities to meet the needs of all supervisory personnel.
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Strategies:

- Educate district administrators of the need for paraprofessionals to be adequately skilled to perform their educational responsibilities as required by federal law, i.e., Elementary and Secondary Education Act ESEA (Title I) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA 2004).
- Increase awareness of supervisory personnel's to provide a leadership role for paraprofessionals
- Work with two and four year institutions of higher education (IHEs) and districts to create a continuum of preservice and inservice training for supervisory personnel of paraprofessionals including teacher preparation and Administrative and Supervisory Endorsement programs.
- Request the adoption of a supervisory training component in state funded administrative trainings, e.g., Leadership Academy, Mentor Academy.

Objective 3: Address critical issues related to paraprofessionals.

Strategies:

- Sustain a paraprofessional consortium to:
 - Monitor roles, responsibilities and competencies of paraeducators in the field
 - Identify funding sources
 - Support training of paraprofessionals
- Support the dissemination of standards and guidelines for all paraprofessionals.
- Coordinate with state agencies and institutions on activities related to paraprofessional development.

Objective 4: Enhance communication systems to disseminate information related to paraprofessionals.

Strategies:

- Develop a comprehensive statewide database of paraprofessionals. Gather and maintain information related to name location, job assignment, training and/or qualifications, etc., of paraprofessionals.
- Identify and explore the potential for collaboration of existing communication systems.
- Collect and disseminate information about current training opportunities, resources, professional organizations, research, etc. Disseminate information to district personnel and paraprofessionals about training opportunities, resources, professional organizations and research.
 - Identify a contact person within Special Education and Title I departments for each school district and charter school.
 - Maintain a state paraprofessional web-site, UtahParas.org.
 - Fund and support the paraprofessional newsletter, *Utah PARagraph*.

Objective 5: Promote visibility and public awareness of paraprofessionals.

Strategies:

- Encourage state, agencies and districts efforts to:
 - Recognize the roles, responsibilities, and value of paraprofessionals by highlighting paraprofessional contributions in agency publications.
 - Acknowledge and celebrate the role of the paraprofessional during Utah Paraprofessional Week as designated by the governor.
 - Recognize the teachers and administrators who started their careers as paraprofessionals.

Objective 6: Promote incentive systems to recruit and retain skilled paraprofessionals.

Strategies:

- Identify strategies for districts and agencies to attract and recruit quality candidates for paraprofessional positions.
- Encourage districts and agencies to:
 - Provide a comprehensive orientation to newly hired paraprofessionals prior to assuming responsibilities.
 - Invite and include paraprofessionals to participate in professional development activities.
 - Provide support systems for paraprofessionals who pursue training while maintaining a position in a district or agency.
- Develop model incentive systems based on the paraprofessional's skills, responsibilities and experiences.

Paraprofessional Consortium

Mission Objectives

- Objective 1:** Promote a broad array of professional development activities to meet the needs of paraprofessionals.
- Objective 2:** Promote a broad array of activities to meet the needs of all supervisory personnel.
- Objective 3:** Address critical issues related to paraprofessionals
- Objective 4:** Enhance communication systems to disseminate information related to paraprofessionals.
- Objective 5:** Promote visibility and public awareness of paraprofessionals.
- Objective 6:** Promote incentive systems to recruit and retain skilled paraprofessionals