

Highly Qualified Paraprofessional Requirements & Frequently Asked Questions

What is HQP?

Section 1119(c) through 1119(h) of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires that all paraprofessionals who provide instructional support AND who work in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds, regardless of the grade level they work with, must meet certain federal qualification requirements to achieve “Highly Qualified Paraprofessional” (HQP) status.

Who determines HQP?

The state does not determine HQP status. HQP status is determined at the Local Education Agency (LEA) level based on the federal guidelines and requirements. If they choose to, LEAs may have higher standards than the federal requirements. Likewise, they may choose to apply the standards to all of their paraprofessionals, regardless of funding source.

What are the federal requirements for HQP?

The following are the minimum federal requirements for Title I, Part A instructional paraprofessionals to achieve HQP status:

- I. All Title I instructional paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
- II. In addition, Title I instructional paraprofessionals must also have:
 - A. Completed at least 2 years of study (defined as a minimum of 48 credit hours) at an institution of higher education; or
 - B. Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
 - C. Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate through a formal State or local academic assessment:
 1. Knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, mathematics; and
 2. Knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

The latter option (II-C) may be fulfilled through standardized assessments such as ParaPro or The ParaEducator Learning Network, or through a locally-developed portfolio process. (See *Where do I find out more about testing options?* and *What is the locally-developed portfolio process?* for more information.)

What is an instructional paraprofessional?

The following definition of an instructional paraprofessional is from the March 1, 2004

document *Title I Paraprofessionals Non-Regulatory Guidance* (available online at www.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/qual/paraprofessional.html):

“Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support” [include] those who (1) provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher, (2) assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials, (3) provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory, (4) conduct parental involvement activities, (5) provide instructional support in a library or media center, (6) act as a translator, or (7) provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher. [*Title I, Section 1119(g)(2)*]

Note: Title I instructional paraprofessionals working solely as translators or who only conduct parental involvement activities must have a high school diploma or its equivalent, but they do not have to meet the additional requirements.

Which Title I instructional paraprofessionals must be HQP?

All instructional paraprofessionals, including special education instructional paraprofessionals, must be HQP in a schoolwide Title I program. In a targeted assistance school, only instructional paraprofessionals funded with Title I monies, either in whole or in part, need to be HQP. Schoolwide programs and targeted assistance schools are defined below:

Targeted Assistance School

A targeted assistance school is one that receives Title I, Part A funds yet is ineligible or has chosen not to operate a Title I schoolwide program. The term "targeted assistance" signifies that the services are provided to a select group of children – those identified as failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the State's challenging content and student performance standards – rather than the funds being used for overall school improvement, as in schoolwide programs.

Schoolwide Program

A schoolwide program permits a school to use funds from Title I, Part A and other federal education program funds and resources to upgrade the entire educational program of the school in order to raise academic achievement for all the students. This contrasts with a Title I targeted assistance program, through which Title I, Part A funds are used only for supplementary educational services for eligible children who are failing or at risk of failing to meet State standards.

What if a Title I paraprofessional doesn't have any instructional duties?

There are no HQP requirements for paraprofessionals who only perform duties in non-instructional positions such as a cafeteria/food services assistant, playground supervisor, personal care assistant, non-instructional computer assistant, etc.

What if a paraprofessional provides special education primary instruction?

In Title I Schools

In addition to the instructional paraprofessional meeting HQP requirements, the supervising special educator must meet the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) content knowledge require-

ments for the students being served.

In Non-Title I Schools

The paraprofessional does not need to meet HQP requirements. However, the supervising special educator must meet the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) content knowledge requirements for the students being served.

More information about special education primary instruction and the HQT requirements for special educators can be found at education.vermont.gov/new/html/licensing/hqt.html.

Do Title I instructional paraprofessionals who work in afterschool or summer programs need to meet HQP requirements?

Yes. Title I instructional paraprofessionals working in any program supported by Title I funds, including afterschool and summer educational programs (such as 21st Century programs), must meet HQP requirements. For targeted assistance schools, HQP requirements must be met when both the instructional paraprofessional and the program are funded in whole or in part using targeted assistance Title I funds. For schoolwide programs, HQP requirements must be met when the school hosting the program receives schoolwide Title I funds.

Is there an exemption or grace period for HQP?

No. Any paraprofessional hired for an instructional paraprofessional position in a Title I, Part A school needs to meet HQP requirements before being hired. This includes special education instructional paraprofessionals.

There are no exemptions for “substitute” or “temporary” instructional paraprofessionals. If a paraprofessional is hired for a Title I funded instructional position, that paraprofessional must meet the requirements for HQP regardless of the length of employment.

Regardless of his or her hire date, a Title I instructional paraprofessional who has not met the federal requirements before the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year must not be re-hired or must be moved to a non-Title I funded position.

Where do I find out more about testing options?

The ParaPro Assessment

The ParaPro Assessment was designed to satisfy the NCLBA requirements for instructional paraprofessionals and measures knowledge and skills in reading, math, and writing. Participating school districts administer the ParaPro Assessment test in an internet-delivered format. A paper-delivered test is offered three times a year at Castleton State College and at Woodstock Union High School. More information about the test is available at www.ets.org/parapro. Vermont’s passing score for this exam is 458.

The ParaEducator Learning Network

The ParaEducator Learning Network is a subscription-based, e-learning program. If this option is used by the LEA, the LEA decides what courses and modules are accepted and what the passing scores are. Information about The ParaEducator Learning Network can be found at

www.masterteacher.com/elearning.cfm. (Note: The ParaEducator Learning Network, which used to be located at www.paraeducator.net, is still sometimes referred to as “paraeducator.net.”)

What is the locally-developed portfolio process?

The decision whether or not to use the portfolio process is determined at the local level. Clear guidelines should be developed regarding portfolio requirements and expectations. Usually the portfolio process is managed by a committee. Once criteria are established, they should be kept on file at the LEA.

The use of college admission exams, such as the SAT and the ACT, are not recommended as part of the portfolio process since they test for college readiness, not necessarily for college-level knowledge.

The ACCUPLACER, a college placement test, is also not recommended as part of the portfolio process. This test helps an educational institution determine if a student should register for developmental or freshman-level courses. The test is customized for each institution and each institution determines its own score and placement requirements.

LEAs may choose to accept comparable HQP documentation from other school districts or states as part of the portfolio process. Documentation should clearly indicate adherence to the federal requirements and include the reason HQP status was granted. For example, a certificate granting HQP status because of a paraprofessional’s “character” is not acceptable. Also, if the reason is a passing score on the ParaPro Assessment, the minimum score must be 458.

Can professional development be substituted for college work?

No. Professional development equivalents cannot be counted unless the professional development equivalents are part of the accepted portfolio process or are part of another local option.

Can LEA-Level Title I, Part A Funds Be Used To Help Paraprofessionals Become HQP?

Yes. Districts may choose to use Title I, Part A funds to underwrite the costs of examinations and/or coursework to assist their paraprofessionals to become HQP. More information about these funding options can be found in the document *Title I Paraprofessionals Non-Regulatory Guidance* (March 4, 2004) and in the Title I, Part A’s *Section 1119 Qualifications for Teachers and Paraprofessionals* statute. Both are available at www.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/qual/paraprofessional.html.

What are the HQP reporting requirements?

Although HQP determinations are decided at the local level, the state is required to include the percentage of Title I, Part A instructional paraprofessionals who are and who are not HQP for each school year in its state reporting procedures. To collect this information, an annual *NCLBA Instructional Paraprofessional Survey* is sent to all supervisory unions with Title I schools by the Vermont Department of Education. Aggregate HQP data is reported at the state level only.

What are the public information requirements for Title I schools in relationship to paraprofessional credentials?

Each school receiving Title I funds (either schoolwide or targeted assistance programs) must inform all parents at the beginning of each school year of their right to request information on the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teachers, including instructional paraprofessionals.

Where can I find more information about paraprofessional qualifications and Title I requirements?

More information about federal paraprofessional qualifications, including the document *Title I Paraprofessionals Non-Regulatory Guidance* (March 4, 2004) and Title I, Part A's *Section 1119 Qualifications for Teachers and Paraprofessionals* statute, can be found at www.ed.gov/admins/tchrqual/qual/paraprofessional.html.

This document, *Highly Qualified Paraprofessional Requirements & Frequently Asked Questions*, can be downloaded at education.vermont.gov/new/html/licensing/hqt.html.

Can I get certified as a paraprofessional in Vermont?

No. Vermont does not offer state-level certification for paraprofessionals. All hiring requirements and HQP determinations are made at the local level.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions about these requirements, please contact the Vermont Department of Education's Office of Professional Standards at (802) 828-1455 or at DOE-HQT@state.vt.us.