

Credential of Competency

for Special Education Instructional Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education has developed a Credential of Competency for special education paraprofessionals to help them achieve qualified status as required by Chapter 14. While there are other ways a paraprofessional can meet the requirements of Chapter 14, the credential is a competency-based approach. This credential addresses seven core competency areas that are modeled after those developed by the [Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#) for special education paraprofessionals. Training modules specific to each competency area can be found on the [PaTTAN website](#).

Special education paraprofessionals work with their supervisors to complete the skill and knowledge areas under each competency area of the [Credential of Competency Checklist](#). The checklist can be found at the QR code to your right and on the PaTTAN website at [Entry Level Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessional Documentation](#).

Once a special education paraprofessional has completed the [Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals Documentation of Special Education Paraprofessionals' Competence in Entry Level Standards-Based Knowledge and Skills](#), a school entity or charter school administrator should attest, on the assurance page, to the demonstration of the paraprofessional's competence in each of the seven core competency areas. With the assurance page signed, the paraprofessional needs to electronically submit the document to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education. Upon approval of the submitted document, the paraprofessional will be issued a [Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessional in Pennsylvania](#).

Each of the core competency areas define what a paraprofessional is required to understand and be able to demonstrate. The seven core competencies are listed below.



Council for
Exceptional Children
(CEC)



Credential of
Competency Checklist
(PaTTAN Website)



PaTTAN
Website

Tasks performed by paraprofessionals are under the ongoing guidance and direction of the instructional team.

Core Competency Area 1: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

Paraprofessionals understand:

- They are expected to follow district policies, guidelines, and procedures.
- Their practice requires attention to professional and ethical considerations.
- Their role is to assist the instructional team and support students under the direction of licensed professionals.
- They participate in professional growth and development, reflect on their professional practices, and use feedback from licensed professionals to improve their skills.

Core Competency Area 2: Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences

Paraprofessionals understand:

- The unique learning needs of individual students.
- The impact of disabilities on development for individual students and their families.
- The value of diversity and individual differences.
- They promote the growth of students with disabilities and encourage their independence and self-advocacy skills.

Core Competency Area 3: Special Education Services and Supports in the Learning Environment

Paraprofessionals understand:

- Services and supports for students with disabilities is based on the federal law for the inclusion of students with disabilities adhering to the guiding principles of free and appropriate public education (FAPE), least restrictive environment (LRE), and individualized education program (IEP).
- The purpose of special education services.
- They support students' instructional, behavioral, social, personal care, safety and medical needs, transitional life-skills, and inclusion in school and society.
- The importance of an organized and inclusive environment.
- They facilitate accommodations, structure, and routines that maximize students' successful access to general educational programming.

Core Competency Area 4: Assessment

Paraprofessionals understand:

- The purposes and rationale of various types of assessments and data collection processes, as well as the link between these assessments and individualized instructional planning.
- They play a vital role in assessment practices by collecting multiple types of data during instruction while using tools and assessments designed/provided by the instructional team.
- Accurate data collection contributes to informed educational decisions that optimize individual plans resulting in enhanced student outcomes.

Core Competency Area 5: Instructional Supports and Strategies

Paraprofessionals understand:

- They support and implement a range of instructional strategies to facilitate student learning and address IEPs.
- They support specially designed instruction for students with disabilities.
- They follow written instructional plans, implement accommodations and modifications, and reinforce concepts presented by the instructional team.
- They use effective strategies to facilitate student learning, inclusion, and growth.

Core Competency Area 6: Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports

Paraprofessionals understand:

- Their state and district policies and procedures, as well as ethical and legal practices for the implementation of positive behavioral supports and interventions.
- They facilitate positive social interactions.
- They support and encourage active engagement by students with disabilities.

Core Competency Area 7: Collaboration with Team Members

Paraprofessionals understand:

- They support the instructional team and collaborate with multiple team members.
- They need to use effective communication, conflict resolution/management and problem-solving strategies to function proactively with team members and the broader community.

Please contact the Paraprofessional Help email with additional questions: parahelp@pattankop.net



References and Resources

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). (2023). *Core competencies for special education paraeducators*. [Online]. Available: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/paraeducators/core-competencies-special-education-paraeducators>

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Josh Shapiro, Governor

