B. Duties of Paraprofessionals

ESEA says that paraprofessionals may perform these duties:

1. Tutoring outside normal class time
2. Assisting with classroom management
3. Assisting in a computer lab, library, or media center
4. Translating
5. Providing instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher
6. Conducting parental involvement activities

Title I paraprofessionals may perform certain functions outside those listed above for the benefit of all students, such as lunchroom, playground, or study hall monitoring. However, the portion of the time they spend on these general duties may not exceed that of a non-Title I paraprofessional at the same school.

Local and state regulations may also affect what duties paraprofessionals may perform. Check with your local association to see if these regulations further limit what paraprofessionals may do.

Paraprofessionals who conduct parental involvement activities or translate are exempt from the requirement to be highly qualified.

The new law became official January 8, 2002. Paraprofessionals hired after that date must meet the requirements immediately. Paraprofessionals hired before that date must prove that they are highly qualified (see below) by 2006. New requirements concerning the duties of paraprofessionals went into effect when the act became law.

Where can I get more information?

- www.nea.org/esea (website of the National Education Association)
- www.nclb.org (NEA's member portal website)
- Your state and local association websites. You can find links to state web sites on the NEA website.
- Your local association leaders and UniServ staff.
- www.ed.gov/nclb (website of the U.S. Department of Education)
- www.learningfirst.org
- Website of your state department of education.
- www.ecs.org (website of the Education Commission of the States)
The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a federal law, contains several provisions which affect paraprofessionals’ job security and duties. This law is also known as The No Child Left Behind Act. The National Education Association (NEA) and its state affiliates want to make sure that all educators are informed about how ESEA affects paraprofessionals in your school.

All paraprofessionals who work in programs funded by Title I are affected. Paraprofessionals are generally those education support professionals who work with students in an instructional role.

ESEA and Paraprofessionals: Steps you can take now

The National Education Association (NEA) and your state association encourage you to:

- Make sure the paraprofessional(s) working in your classroom is covered by ESEA.
- Determine whether the paraprofessional(s) in your classroom was officially hired before or after January 8, 2002.
- Encourage your paraprofessional(s) to meet ESEA criteria to maximize their employment opportunities.
- Advocate for the school system to assist paraprofessionals in achieving highly qualified status.
- Assist paraprofessionals in finding time and accessing the funding available through ESEA for their professional development.
- Ensure that your paraprofessional(s) is performing duties consistent with ESEA.
- Provide paraprofessional(s) with information about the law.
- Encourage your paraprofessional(s) to collect documentation of their education, including high school diploma or GED certificate and transcripts for any college courses taken.
- Assist your paraprofessional(s) with submitting documentation to the school district, encouraging them to keep copies. Your local may also want to keep copies in case of layoffs or transfers.
- Encourage state and local officials to take a broad view of assessment of paraprofessionals, to include portfolios, evaluation, work experiences, etc.
- Organize efforts to elect lawmakers who support positive changes in ESEA and involve members in those efforts.

What is my Association doing?

As the U.S. Congress was considering ESEA, the National Education Association strongly represented its members’ interests. Through NEA’s advocacy some important changes, including options for paraprofessionals — not just one mandated way — were won to meet the new regulations. The Association is assisting members through bargaining and providing information and workshops. In addition, the Association is working with school and state officials to make sure implementation of ESEA is fair and equitable.