

Guidelines for Programming Paraprofessionals for Blended and Fully Remote Learning

School reopening amid the pandemic requires a significant, temporary reduction in the number of students who will receive in-person instruction each day and the continued reliance on remote learning. This document is intended to guide teachers, paraprofessionals, school teams, and administrators as they determine the best ways to provide paraprofessional support and work with families to develop Special Education Program Adaptions Documents (PADs) that respond to the needs of students with IEP recommendations for paraprofessionals. This document relates only to the COVID-19 pandemic and the DOE's response thereto. Except as otherwise explicitly stated in the DOE-UFT MOA on Blended Learning, the duties and working conditions of paraprofessionals have not changed.

Under socially distant in-person models, students may receive much more intensive services, i.e., significantly reduced student to teacher ratios. The school's daily routines (e.g., transitions) may be substantially changed, and a student may have needs related to wearing a face covering or complying with other health protocols. It is also likely that some of the services offered by a paraprofessional to a student when the student is learning remotely will be different. Discussing the paraprofessional's activities with a student's family and documenting them on the PAD will be appropriate and important.

Likewise, school teams must consider and discuss with parents how the IEP-assigned paraprofessional will provide educational benefit in the student's remote learning environment. The details of the paraprofessional's activities to support the student during remote learning should be discussed with the parent and documented on the PAD.

When determining how a paraprofessional can most effectively deliver educational benefit, school teams should consider the following:

- The paraprofessional's role as described in the IEP;
- The amount of synchronous and asynchronous instruction being delivered remotely;
- The remote learning platform(s) being utilized by the classroom teacher;
- Each student's degree of fluency with the remote learning platform;
- Ways in which the paraprofessional can support the students indirectly (e.g., assisting students in the use of available instructional resources and supporting students and families with accessing remote learning platforms);
- Ways in which a paraprofessional can support partner teachers;
- Ways in which paraprofessionals can support students directly (e.g., prompting students to maintain social distancing, reminding them to correctly wear PPE, escorting students to and from locations or services, supporting students in practicing handwashing and sanitizing).

For students recommended for a special class with a classroom paraprofessional and an IEP-assigned paraprofessional, schools should carefully consider how both paraprofessionals would be able to support the student remotely. Differences between the IEP and the PAD should not be driven by staffing needs at the school. The student's IEP-related needs and needs related to learning in blended and remote settings must be prioritized.

Paraprofessional Classroom Manager

In cases where a paraprofessional is not serving a specific student or class, schools are encouraged to offer the Paraprofessional Classroom Manager role, which was developed in partnership with the UFT. Information about the Paraprofessional Classroom Manager role can be found at:

<https://nycdoe.sharepoint.com/sites/PrincipalsHub/SitePages/Agreement-on-Paraprofessional-Duties.aspx>

Generally, when paraprofessionals are not working directly with a specific student or class, they may be directed to:

- assist with arrival and/or dismissal, including busing
- assist with health screening upon entry
- provide student and parent outreach
- perform other administrative duties, including but not limited to hall duty, cafeteria duty, attendance processing

Paraprofessionals will not be required to stay in the school building for more than 6 hours and 20 minutes per day and will be expected to remotely perform the equivalent of 30 minutes of work, e.g., phone calls to parents, documenting student work completed.

Considerations for IEP-Assigned and Instructional Paraprofessionals

When considering paraprofessional support for a student working in a blended or remote setting, school teams should discuss with families how the services were delivered during the spring school closure. Input and feedback should be gathered from multiple stakeholders (parents, paraprofessional, student's previous teacher) to help inform what worked well and where there is room for improvement. In some cases when students are remote, some health or behavior paraprofessionals may not be needed for remote student support as outlined on the students' IEPs. **If the functions of the paraprofessional cannot be provided in a remote environment, the paraprofessional should be assigned to another appropriate duty or instructional role during remote learning sessions at the discretion of the principal. The Program Adaptions Document (PAD) should be updated by the primary teacher in consultation with the family to reflect any decisions made as a result of this inquiry process.**

Two general questions should be asked as the assignments of paraprofessionals are considered:

- How can the service provided by the paraprofessional to an individual student during typical circumstances be delivered effectively when a student is remote or when the paraprofessional is working remotely?
- What other new needs does the student have in the blended or remote learning environment that can be supported by the paraprofessional?

The following are some more specific questions and considerations for IEP paraprofessional services to help determine the need for support in in-person and remote learning environments (additional factors should be considered based on individual student needs):

Health	
In-Person	Remote Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student require non-medical specialized health care support (e.g., feeding, assistance with braces, or prosthesis)? • Does the student require positioning or bracing multiple times daily? • Does the student require health-related interventions multiple times daily? • Does the student require direct assistance with most personal care? • Can any of the above be performed intermittently throughout the day or do they require continuous support? • Can a paraprofessional be programmed to meet the needs of students with similar recommended services to minimize the number of adults required in the classroom? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will a paraprofessional address non-medical specialized health care support (e.g., feeding, assistance with braces, or prosthesis) remotely? • How will a paraprofessional assist in positioning or bracing a student remotely? • How can a paraprofessional support a student who requires direct assistance with most personal care remotely? • How can a paraprofessional support the medical needs of a student remotely? • What kind of instructional support, aligned to the PAD, can the paraprofessional provide remotely?

Behavior Support	
In-Person	Remote Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student present with severe behavior challenges, such as ongoing (daily) incidents of injurious behaviors to self and/or others? • Does the student present an elopement risk? • Does the student have a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) that can be implemented with fidelity in the reduced-sized, in-person instructional group? • Can the student's behavior needs be met by the classroom teacher, given the reduced size? • Can the student participate in a reduced-sized instructional group without frequent verbal and/or physical prompting to stay on task and follow directions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student present with the same severe behavior challenges, such as ongoing (daily) incidents of injurious behaviors to self and/or others in a remote environment, and is it possible for a paraprofessional to provide support in a remote environment? • Does the student present an elopement risk under typical circumstances and how does remote learning impact that risk? What is the role of a paraprofessional in a remote environment as it relates to elopement risk? • Does the student have a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) that addresses behaviors in the remote environment and can be implemented with fidelity remotely?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the student require individualized assistance to transition to and from classes/activities most of the time? • Does the student need an adult in close proximity to supervise social interactions and ensure social distancing is maintained with peers at all times? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the student participate in remote learning without frequent verbal and/or physical prompting to stay on task and follow directions; how would a paraprofessional support this need remotely? • Does the student require individualized assistance to transition to and from classes/activities most of the time even in a remote environment and how would a paraprofessional support this need remotely?
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Alternate Placement Paraprofessionals

An Alternate Placement Paraprofessional (APP) is only assigned to students who require bilingual instruction when a teacher with a bilingual extension in their home language is not available. This need is not diminished by reductions to the student’s instructional group size.

In a remote learning environment, live interpretation and support by an APP should be supported with various tools that allow translation or interpretation into the student’s home language to be more easily achieved. However, these tools do not replace an APP, and students will continue to need the support of an alternate placement paraprofessional to access curriculum and instruction.

In order to maximize the number of students that can benefit from the instructional support of an APP at one time, every effort should be made to efficiently program students with the same language needs and the same IEP recommendation during both in-person and remote learning. An APP can and should provide service to more than one student with the same language needs in a class. APPs should not be programmed to serve multiple classes or multiple modalities at the same time. This is best practice during standard programming, as well as during reduced class sizes under temporary COVID-19 programming.

Possible Roles and Responsibilities of the Paraprofessional

While a paraprofessional cannot be the provider of special education programs services (ICT, special class, SETSS) in place of the special education teacher, they can assist in the delivery of instructional activities under the general supervision of the special education teacher.

Decisions about each paraprofessional’s role should be based on the strengths of each paraprofessional as it relates to a student’s needs.

In a remote learning environment, when not working directly with a student or class, a paraprofessional's role may include, but not be limited to:

- During Instructional Coordination time, assisting in the preparation and upload of remote learning materials;
- Facilitating small instructional groups under the direction of the teacher;
- Supporting individual or small groups of students with learning activities under the direction of the teacher – this could mean working in a virtual “breakout room” while the teacher is working in the virtual “main room” or helping a student with asynchronous learning activities assigned by the teacher. (Where video-conferencing is deemed appropriate, the support will take place in the teacher’s virtual classroom. The teacher does not have to be present in the virtual classroom when the paraprofessional is helping with asynchronous activities; therefore the paraprofessional should be listed as the co-teacher in the virtual classroom.) In all cases, the nature of student support must align with the IEP and the PAD;
- Assisting families and students in accessing remote learning platforms;
- Sharing strategies that have been successful for supporting the individual needs of students;
- Discussing how families are ensuring social distancing and wearing a mask in the community; providing suggestions for supporting these behaviors for their child;
- Assisting students and families in reinforcing Positive Behavior Support systems.

In an in-person instructional environment, a paraprofessional's role may include, but not be limited to:

- Facilitating a small instructional group while a teacher supports the rest of the class;
- Assisting students on a 1:1 or small group basis periodically throughout the day to support health, behavior, or toileting needs. This should include continually monitoring and ensuring appropriate hygiene and safety precautions (e.g., hand-washing, social-distancing, and wearing a mask);
- Supporting an in-person group of students receiving remote learning as part of a blended group;
- Providing direct support to students who are in-person, as well as to students who are remote, under the direction of the teacher or related service provider as appropriate;
- There are also students who require full-time in-person paraprofessional support. This group may include students with severe physical disabilities, significant behavior challenges or severe difficulty attending to remote instruction, and others who cannot benefit from remote instruction without additional support. In those cases, students should be considered for full time, in person instruction (if offered by the student’s school), or the maximum amount of time possible in the school’s schedule.

Paraprofessional Completion of Encounter Attendance

Paraprofessionals who provide individual support to students during blended and remote learning should continue to enter their delivery of support to the student into Encounter Attendance as follows.

The following options are available within the *Service Location* dropdown menu on the Encounter Attendance service record:

The screenshot shows a form with several fields. The 'Service Location' field is highlighted with a red box, and a blue arrow points to it from the left. The dropdown menu is open, showing three options: 'Phone only service', 'Phone only consultation', and 'Remote Learning Platform'. The 'Service Location' field currently displays '(Select)'. Other fields include 'End Time: Office', 'Service Type: Day Care', 'Language of Service: Phone only service', 'Session Type: Phone only consultation', 'Duration:', and 'Grouping: Remote Learning Platform'.

Location	Applicable Service Types	Description
Phone only service	Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) Paraprofessional	Provision of special education instruction and/or paraprofessional consultation with the <u>student</u> .
Phone only consultation	Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) Paraprofessional	Provision of special education instruction and/or paraprofessional consultation with the <u>family</u> .
Remote Learning Platform	Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) Paraprofessional	Provision of special education instruction and/or paraprofessional supports via remote learning platform to the student.