

## Guideline for Temporary Support Assistants (TSAs)

Every school district within the Sonoma County SELPA is required to provide a full continuum of placement options for students with identified disabilities who are receiving special education services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and California laws and regulations describe a continuum of placements such as instruction in regular classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (CFR 300.551 (b) (1)).

The IDEA also defines related services as the utilization of aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. This applies to any general education program or special education program in which the student may participate (34 CFR Part 300.550-300.556). There may be special circumstances when a student may need additional support in order to be successful in his/her educational placement.

A goal for any student with special needs is to encourage, promote, and maximize independence. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team is responsible for developing and implementing a program that promotes that independence. Natural supports and existing staff supports should be used whenever possible.

If the IEP team is considering Temporary Support Assistance (TSA) as a support for the classroom staff, the team may determine:

1. Natural supports and/or existing staff supports are not adequate for the student to participate and progress in the general education program;
2. Additional support is necessary to assist classroom staff in facilitating the student in:
  - Advancing appropriately toward the annual goals and/or;
  - Involvement in and progress in the general curriculum and/or;
  - Participation in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities and/or;
  
  - Participation with other disabled and non-disabled students.
3. How quickly it anticipates the support can be faded **and** develop a method for systematic evaluation toward independence and more natural supports.

If the IEP Team recommends TSA, the team is also responsible for monitoring so that additional supports may be faded as soon as possible. **If not carefully monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, additional paraprofessional support can unintentionally foster dependence.**

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## Determination of Need for TSA

See the PENT website for forms and resources to assist with this evaluation:

**<http://www.pent.ca.gov/frm/forms.html>**

### Initial

When the members of the IEP team are considering the need for TSA, it is anticipated that an Assessment Plan will need to be developed in order to collect necessary data to bring to the IEP team.

### Review of Need

At regular intervals, designated members of the IEP team should use tools to collect data about whether the level of assistance continues to be needed. As the student's level of independence or ability to use natural supports increases, behavior improves or the make-up of the class changes, the assistance should be faded.

### Areas of Need

It is important that the team consider each type of assistance listed below in order to determine if the student needs assistance from a TSA with a particular activity and to estimate the amount of time that will be needed.

1. Health/Personal Care-
  1. Self help and bathroom needs- If a student needs assistance with toileting or other self-help skills, the team should note the times and duration for this activity. This should only be for brief periods during the day.
  2. Assistance during snack or lunch- If the student requires assistance with feeding, etc., note the type of assistance needed and note the times and duration required. Encourage reliance on peer helpers (with supervision) or other natural supports as much as possible for getting out food, opening containers, etc.
  3. Specialized Physical Health Care- Some intensive health supports may necessitate support for an indefinite length of time.
  4. Assistance with medical needs- Some students need additional assistance for medical reasons. If so, the team should consider the doctor's orders and the time of day and duration. Some medically related supports might be necessary only for brief periods per day/week.
2. Behavior-
  1. Due to behavior challenges, some students may need intensive support in order to assist classroom staff in implementing a Behavior Support Plan.

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2. Support assistance may be needed for a brief period to collect data while regular classroom staff is implementing a Behavior Support Plan.
3. Instruction-
  1. Curriculum adaptations- Adaptations of the curriculum (highlighting, copying, enlarging, adding icons, cutting and pasting, etc.) should be done under the direction of the teacher. Most students will require no more than 1-1 1/2 hours daily for curriculum adaptation. Curriculum adaptations do not need to be done in the classroom or in the physical presence of the teacher. Adult volunteers and parents may perform some of these activities.
  2. Instructional support- Classroom staff may need assistance in supporting a student in staying on-task or providing follow-up instruction. This should be faded as soon as schedules and/or behavior supports are put into place.

### Professionalism:

A paraprofessional must always be working under the supervision of a credentialed staff member. The paraprofessional is protected by the district's liability insurance, as long as the paraprofessional is carrying out duties as assigned. The classroom teacher is responsible for ensuring the paraprofessional receives all breaks required by contract.

Paraprofessionals must be well aware of the important requirements for **confidentiality** when dealing with special education students. They need to be careful not to share any personal information about the student with anyone other than "employees of the district with a legitimate educational interest."

The Case Manager and/or classroom teacher should clearly instruct the TSA as to preferences regarding communication with the student's parent(s). Many Case Managers and teachers prefer that a TSA communicate only daily routine information to parents and that all other communication about progress, behavior, health and other concerns be kept between teacher and parent(s) only.

TSAs need to be trained about appropriate physical contact with students. Light physical prompting may only be used when necessary to keep the student engaged with learning or assist with self-care activities, (e.g., putting hands down, helping a student move through a line, assisting a student in staying seated.) Any other physical contact may only be used to ensure the safety of the student or others. If there is a potential for emergency intervention, the paraprofessional may only use professionally accepted interventions based on having received training from programs such as Managing Student Behaviors (MSB), Pro-Act.

If paraprofessionals are providing health or medical supports, they will always be trained and supervised by an appropriately qualified professional. District liability insurance applies as long as the TSA is performing duties according to training.

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It is important that the paraprofessional, classroom teacher, and Case Manager have regular, ongoing communication to ensure that all have the same expectations as to the role of the TSA.

General Tips for Paraprofessionals on How to Communicate With the Teacher:

- Be honest with the teacher at all times. It is okay to say, “I don’t understand.”
- When working one-on-one with a student, make sure that the instructions from the teacher are followed. If the teacher gives you no instructions, ask!
- Ask the teacher how a student learns best. Remember that not all students learn the same way. What might work for one student might not work for another student.
- When you are working with students in groups, check with the teacher to know what is expected of you.

### Peer Assistance

The teacher and the paraprofessional should encourage peers to assist the identified student during the day when appropriate. Most activities will be more enjoyable for the student if he/she is assisted by peers rather than by an adult.

## Guidelines for Planning the Fading of Temporary Support Assistance in the IEP

- Develop goals and objectives that contain reduced levels of support and prompting to be used as measures of need for TSA.
- Include a specific plan for the reinforcement of the Behavior Support Plan.
  - Specify accommodations/modifications to be provided as needed or as requested by student.
  - Indicate specific activities and/or time targeted for support under services or notes page on the IEP.
  - Specify the criteria and fading measures to be used, who will review the data and how often in the written plan for fading and/or on the notes page of the IEP.

### Team Meetings (to facilitate/support the fading process):

The Case Manager, teacher, parent(s) and others involved with the student should meet on a regular basis to evaluate student progress and need for TSA. The paraprofessional should be given encouragement, strategies and support for encouraging student independence and stepping back as possible. If a paraprofessional is having difficulty “letting go,” it may be necessary to rotate the paraprofessional to another classroom.

### Techniques to Promote Independence and Fading of Support

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1. Watch before assisting. Can the student ask for help from teacher or peer? Can the student problem solve on his/her own?
2. Give the student extra time to process and respond before assisting.
3. Have high expectations as to what the student understands or can do independently.
4. Provide consistent classroom schedule (posted, visual, at desk if needed, reinforcement periods included). Teach student how to use it.
5. Start with the least intrusive prompts to get student to respond: