

Camdenton R-III Schools

Paraprofessional

Handbook

2012-2013



## Table of Contents:

Teambuilding Tips	3	
Professionalism	4	
Confidentiality	4	
Communication with Parents and Teachers	5	
Responsibilities in the General Education Classroom		5
Paraprofessional Duties	6	
District Crisis Management Plan	6	
Lunch	6	
Schedules	7	
Absenteeism	7	
In-Service	7	
Physical Contact with Students	7	
Toileting Needs and Diaper Changing	8	
Resources	8	
Things to Do	8	

## Appendix:

- Appendix A: Basic Behavior Intervention Techniques  
Behavioral Troubleshooting
- Appendix B: Confidentiality Scenarios

## Team Building Tips

In order for our district to meet the needs of students effectively and successfully, we must work as a team. Please consider the following tips:

- Communicate with the teachers' daily. This is essential in building a program that meets the needs of students.
- Ask your teacher's opinion of your performance.
- Discuss problems NOW. Please do not allow them to grow.
- Try to follow the instructions given **exactly**.
- Remember that all final decisions are determined by the teacher. Offer suggestions or ideas, but please be professional if the suggestions are not implemented.
- Please do not talk about school problems to people outside of school.
- Please give the teacher feedback, it helps in communication.
- Let teachers know your interests, hobbies, background and experiences. These can contribute to class projects and special interest centers.
- Ask questions – the teacher may assume that you know when you may not.
- Learn the classroom procedures: fire drills, earthquake drills, tornado drills, restroom rules, recess rules, lunch rules, etc.
- Share the responsibilities – offer to do something to help in the classroom. Work with the teacher as a team.
- Be patient – with yourself (teaching is a learned profession, it takes time.)
- Be patient – with the teacher (some days are more demanding than others.)
- Be patient – with the students (the courtesy and respect shown to students will be imitated.)
- Become familiar with the types of students served in the classroom.
- Become familiar with the academic approach of the teacher.
- Become familiar with the various types of academic equipment and materials used in the classroom.
- Maintain a positive self-concept even when it seems a student's comments are personally directed toward you. This will help you not be dependent upon constant positive feedback from children.
- Enthusiasm and sensitivity to the feelings of students are very important. On the other hand, this sensitivity must not get in the way of giving the child security created through structure and consistency. Sometimes students need for us to be direct and firm.
- Mutual respect and support between the teacher and paraprofessional must be shown at all times.
- There must be consistency in the handling of rules and rewards in the classroom.
- Be prepared to give any practical assistance that the teacher feels necessary for the success of the program. Work with the teachers. Have a positive attitude and emphasize the progress made.
- When complaints are worded in constructive ways, problem can be solved easily.
- Be on TIME, and be dependable. Be a positive role model.
- Discuss with the teacher the student's goals and objectives on the IEP. Discuss with the teacher how to implement these goals and objectives.

**Professionalism**

- School dress – The dress is professional, but appropriate for the age of the students with whom you are working and the activities in the classroom. Shorts, blue jeans, and sweats are not allowed. Culotte skirts (divided shorts) are okay. Some buildings have Laker Pride Days on which blue jeans may be worn.
- A paraprofessional cannot make lesson plans or develop instruction.
- Please be professional throughout the school day by being aware of your actions.
- Please do not gossip. Rumors cause much conflict and hurt feelings.
- Please keep personal phone calls to a minimum during the workday. Please do not use cell phones, beepers, personal laptops, or classroom computers for personal use during the school day.
- If a problem or conflict exists, please 1) contact the special education teacher, 2) then the process coordinator of the building, and then 3) the assistant director or director.
- If more information is needed as to WHY something is being done, please ask the special education teachers. Sometimes the teachers forget to tell you why. Please ask.
- The primary focus of a paraprofessional is to work with the students. If there is more than one paraprofessional in a classroom, conversations between paraprofessionals concerning personal matters are not allowed.
- Please keep the focus on the students. Please keep the students engaged and working as much as possible.

**Confidentiality**

- Paraprofessionals have access to read the files of the assigned students.
- Paraprofessionals need to read the IEP(s) of the student(s) they are serving.
- All files, paperwork, notes, and daily activities of the special education students are confidential and not for discussion with any other person except the teachers working with the student.
- Never discuss one student with the parents of another student. Even if the two students are involved with one another. This should be a teacher discussion.
- Only in a private school setting can students be discussed. Please avoid talking about students in the hall, main office, at lunch, recess, etc. Even if others who are listening are staff members, if they do not work with the student, confidentiality is being broken.
- Always be aware of the audience. Using examples of students in college classes is not allowed without the consent of the parent. Talking to teachers in other districts about specific students should be avoided. All information about students and teachers stay in the building.
- Please do not discuss students in the grocery store, post office or at town events.
- See Confidentiality Scenarios in the Appendix.

**Communication With Parents and Teachers**

- As a paraprofessional, you have a unique role.
- All information passed to you by the general education teacher or parent must be passed on to the special education teacher.
- Please document all information given to you by the parent or teacher.
- A paraprofessional's responsibility is to inform, not to act on the information.
- The special education teacher is the responsible party for the student and must be kept informed.
- Answers to questions are given by the special education teacher.
- Special education teachers contact the parents by phone, not the paraprofessional.
- No paraprofessional is allowed to give out their home phone number to the parent of their assigned students. All communication needs to go through the special education teacher or the school.
- Words that can be used when asked for information directly include: "I'll have to ask \_\_\_\_\_, and he/she will get back with you."

**Responsibilities in the General Education Classroom**

- The general education teacher is responsible and in charge of the classroom. Please redirect your assigned student as quietly as possible, without drawing attention.
- Please respect the teacher's teaching styles and behavioral management systems. If a teacher is working with a student or group of students, please do not interrupt by disciplining a student that you are not assigned. There is a fine line between helping and taking over the classroom. You may work with all students in the classroom.
- If staff conflicts or serious concerns develop, please go through the special education teacher first, then the Process Coordinator, then the Director's office.
- Kristy Kindwall – phone: 346-9245 Email [kkindwall@camdentonschools.org](mailto:kkindwall@camdentonschools.org)
- Leslie Luttrell – phone: 346-9246 Email [lluttrell@camdentonschools.org](mailto:lluttrell@camdentonschools.org)
- Ways to help in the classroom:
  - Implement accommodations/modifications as stated in the IEP. This may include:
    - Simplifying or shortening assignments in the general education classroom per directions from special education teacher and/or as stated in the IEP
    - Reading tests and assignments if this is an accommodation on the IEP
    - Assisting student with using assistive technology
    - Using visual cues, behavior charts, reinforcements, etc. as directed by special education teacher and/or as stated in the IEP
  - Redirect behavior as directed by Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP) and/or special education teacher.

## Paraprofessional Duties

- Whenever an assigned student is absent, or time is available, please ask the special education teacher and/or process coordinator about other activities you may perform. **Activities such as reading novels, reading the newspaper, crocheting, checking personal email, and etc. during class-time are not allowed. You can check personal email during lunch, between class periods, and before/after school only.**
- A flexible paraprofessional is one that is in high demand. We appreciate you!
- Sometimes, students leave or move-in during the school year and assignments change. We appreciate your willingness to try new experiences to meet the needs of our students in the district.
- Paraprofessional duties may begin at 7:30, 7:45 or 8:00 am and end at 3:00, 3:15 or 3:30 pm. Times depend on assigned duties and building assignment. All paraprofessionals have a 30 minute uninterrupted lunch each day which allows for a 7 hour work day.
- Please be on time. If you need to leave early for any reason, please contact the building principal to obtain permission, and inform the teacher with whom you work and the process coordinator. Paraprofessionals cannot leave the building during the school day without permission, **even at lunch.**
- If a paraprofessional leaves the building for lunch, he/she must clock out and back in. The secretary that takes care of comp time must be informed of these occurrences so he/she can make the appropriate adjustments in SIS time.
- If paraprofessionals clock in early or late an accumulation of extra hours occurs. It is against district policy for paraprofessionals to work more than the allotted 35 hours a week. Extra time will be recorded by building secretaries as comp time.
- Comp time will not be allowed to accumulate to more than 4 hours. If you are approaching 4 hours, make arrangements with the building principal and the process coordinator to take your comp time.
- ECSE paraprofessionals must use any accumulated comp time on Wednesdays when there are no students in attendance by coming to school late. ECSE paraprofessionals may also leave early on Wednesdays that are not PLC days to utilize comp time.
- All other paraprofessionals must use their comp time as directed by their building principals with approval from their process coordinators.

## District Crisis Management Plan

- In the event of a crisis situation in the district, these are codes are district-wide.
  - Intruder/Armed Intruder: **LOCK DOWN:** Secure the Building.
  - Possible Hostage or Possible Life Threatening Situation: **LOCK DOWN:** Secure the Building.
  - Bomb Threat: Building not identified – Evacuation will be announced.
  - Bomb Threat: Building identified – Evacuation will be announced.
- Please check with the teacher for more details. These procedures are displayed within the classroom in some manner. The Camdenton R-III School District Emergency Safety Plan will be distributed to you and teachers separately.

## Lunch

- Paraprofessionals have a 30-minute lunch break each day without students or duties.
- If the paraprofessional duties include feeding students, please wash hands and wear plastic gloves provided in the cafeteria.
- Some students require special feeding utensils. Please make sure the utensils are cleaned daily and stored in a Ziploc bag to ensure as germ-free conditions as possible. Please store the utensils in the same place each day so they can be easily found.
- When working with students on feeding, please allow the student to be as independent as possible. As a school, we are here to educate, not baby-sit. Teaching is usually harder than doing the skill for the student.
- Some students require snacks throughout the day and snacks are stored in the classroom. Please make sure the snacks are properly stored to prevent contamination or insects.

## Schedules

- Paraprofessionals are required to keep their schedules up-to-date so that if a substitute is needed, the schedule can be followed.
- At the beginning of the school year, a schedule will be provided by the Process Coordinator. Daily routines and class schedules may be changed by the special education teacher, Process Coordinator, or Director's office to meet the needs of the students. **Paraprofessionals may NOT change their own schedules.** If there is a conflict in the schedule, please see the special education teacher or Process Coordinator.

## Absenteeism

- If you are unable to come to school, please contact the person in your building responsible for getting substitutes. It is important to call as early as possible, so that a substitute can be found. In some buildings, you can call the contact person as early as 5:30 am.
- If you have a doctor appointment or any other absence that you know of in advance, please let the special education teacher know as early as possible. This allows us to plan better.
- If a staff member leaves school for more than one hour, it is considered a half-day. Please contact the building principal when leaving.

**In-Service**

As a paraprofessional, there are requirements for in-service on a yearly basis. It is your responsibility to check that all requirements are met. Please check with in the Department of Interventions Administrative Office if you have any questions. You are required to have 14 hours of in service. If you are a new paraprofessional you are required to have 15 hours of in service. Early release days do not count as in service days.

**Physical Contact With Students**

- Any physical contact with students that can be misinterpreted as abuse must be avoided.
- Avoid being alone with a student as much as possible.
- Give no hugs with older students. Instead, use alternatives like shaking hands.
- Pat students on the back, shoulder, or arm.
- Be aware of your actions.

**Toileting Needs and Diaper Changing**

- Sanitation, cleanliness, privacy and odor control is important.
- Please follow these guidelines when changing diapers.
  - Get all supplies needed to change diaper.
  - Put on rubber gloves.
  - Remove old diaper, clean student and put on new diaper.
  - Clean off mat with bleach water or other disinfectant cleaner.
  - Roll up old diaper as small as possible. Pull rubber gloves over the diaper, put diaper in plastic bag, roll as tight as possible, and then tie shut.
  - Wash hands.
- Plastic gloves and plastic bags are ordered through the special education department.
- When toilet training a student, please use gloves.

**Resources**

- Books and tapes are available to checkout on many disabilities, being a paraprofessional, and other related topics.
- Please check out these books and/or tapes through the Department of Interventions Office.

**Things to Do to Start the School Year:**

- Meet special education teachers and general education teachers.
- Obtain paraprofessional schedules and copies of IEP's from process coordinator and/or special education teacher.
- New paraprofessionals need to have their pictures taken in the main office in some buildings. Please check with assistant principal.
- Obtain district schedule for the school year.



## Basic Teaching Techniques

- Presentation of lessons when working with students needs to always be left to right and top to bottom progression.
- VAKT – Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, Tactile – The more senses used when presenting information, the easier, it is to learn.
- Get the student’s attention before giving directions. You might need to walk over to the student, touch the student on the arm or back, and repeat the directions. Ask the student to look at you and then repeat the direction. Make eye contact before giving the direction. Some students require close proximity to get their attention. Get on their eye level instead of towering over them.
- Restrict verbal cueing. State the direction one time. Give sufficient wait time. (Up to 2 minutes). Repeat direction once with visual support. Give sufficient wait time. Model what you want the student to do.
- Some students require a visual. If so, just point to or hold up the visual without verbal prompting.
- The lower functioning students need fewer words in the direction to understand. For example, “Do this.”
- Use the least words possible to give a direction. Give the directions in a positive, specific statement. Example: Hands to Self. No hitting. Walking feet.
- Directions may be paired with visual cues. If a pre-made visual is not available, draw it on a piece of paper.
- Use the techniques of the teacher in the classroom. **Consistency is needed for learning and behavior.**
- Follow teacher directions precisely and consistently. Do not change a student’s routine, expectations, or reinforcements unless the teacher directs you to. **Consistency is needed for learning and behavior.**
- Do not create visual aids, behavior charts, or lesson plans without teacher directions and support. Teachers provide these items and paraprofessionals implement them as directed by the teachers with whom they work.
- Follow teacher directions for low language students precisely. Model use of assistive technology rather than utilizing hand-over-hand. **Consistency is needed for learning and behavior.**

## Basic Behavior Intervention Techniques

- Use common sense.
- Follow the plan of the teacher in the classroom. Know the rules and consequences. Talk with the teacher and ask questions.
- If a direction is given to a student, please follow through on the direction. Be consistent. Expect the students to do as asked. Have the same expectations daily. Verbalize and remind students of rules often. (Example: I like how Mary is sitting in her seat. Her feet are still. Her hands are still. She is ready to learn.)
- Use high fives, smiles and other small, fun rewards often.

- Use proximity control as much as possible. If a student is misbehaving, many times just moving physically closer or continually walking by the student will redirect behavior.
- Do the minimum to redirect behavior:
  - Start with a look.
  - Touch on feet or arm without interrupting the lesson.
  - Say their name in conversation.
  - Ask them how they are doing.
  - Ask them if they need help with a problem.
  - Praise another child for doing the desired behavior.
  - State specific behavior desired objectively. Keep anger out of your voice.
- **Avoid arguing with a student.** Give 2 appropriate choices instead. If the student is unable to make a choice, choose for him.
- Avoid embarrassing the student as much as possible. Remove from the group if possible.
- Redirect student behavior by changing the subject, singing a song, moving to a new location, changing activities, etc.
- Remind the student of consequences before behavior is out of control.
- If the behavior is severe, get help. We work as a team.
- During fits or crying bouts, avoid eye contact with the student. Be careful not to indirectly give attention to misbehavior. As soon as the student stops the fit or crying, praise correct behavior and make eye contact.
- Physical restraint is the last resort. It may only be used if the student is putting himself or another in physical harm.
- Avoid carrying students if at all possible.
  - If a student will not walk- do a wall sit (a type of hold used with preschool and smaller children as described in district restraint training) until the student is ready. It does not matter that the student is missing an activity or that noise may disrupt other classrooms
  - If a student must be carried- Do not carry the student alone. Use proper carrying techniques per district training
- See Behavioral Troubleshooting in Appendix A.

## Appendix A: Dealing with Behavior

100 HOW TO BE A PARA PRO

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Table 9

### Behavioral Troubleshooting

- Be proactive in scanning the environment for possible behavioral precipitants.
- Reduce or eliminate stressors, to the extent possible.
- Read the student's cues and signals and react *before* inappropriate behavior occurs.
- "Plug in" activities designed to reduce stress and anxiety *before* behavioral disruption occurs (e.g., relaxation exercises, application of deep pressure, etc.).
- Utilize breaks wisely, and only *prior* to behavioral disruption.
- Be *proactive* in providing peripheral, direct academic, and similar supports as preventative behavioral measures.
- Diffuse tense situations through re-direction and distraction, where appropriate.
- Increase structure and predictability.
- Recognize the need for specific behavioral supports.
- Keep the teacher informed of changes in behavior.

## Appendix B: Confidentiality

### CONFIDENTIALITY SCENARIOS

**Directions:** Several situations related to confidentiality that require a decision to be made are presented below. Read each of the situations and apply your school's policies in order to make a decision for each scenario. Then discuss your response with other team members.

#### Student to student

Sue is a new paraprofessional at Smith High School. She is 20 years old. Sue went to Smith High School as a student, so she knows many of the teachers and several of the students. Her primary responsibilities are related to supporting two students with moderate intellectual disabilities in several inclusive classrooms.

Sue is trying to figure out how to support the two students in their history class. She is very frustrated and has decided to solicit input from several other students in the class. She meets with the student's classmates during her lunch break and describes to the students without disabilities what she believes are the challenges and the learning priorities of the students with disabilities. The students without disabilities generate a wide variety of strategies that may potentially be supportive of the students with disabilities. At the end of the lunch break, Sue feels excited and very positive with the outcome of this informal lunch chat. As a matter of fact, she has decided to have lunch with these students once a week to solicit their ideas and feedback related to the educational program of the student with disabilities.

**Discussion:** Has Sue broken any rules about confidentiality? If so, which ones? How? What could she have done differently?

**Key:** In most schools this would represent a breach in confidentiality. Sue should have brought her questions and concerns to her team. It is inappropriate to discuss issues related to a student—with and without disabilities—with any other student. It is also inappropriate for Sue to establish ongoing meetings with students.

#### Faculty lounge talk

Brian is a paraprofessional who supports a student with severe disabilities in an inclusive third-grade classroom. He has been a paraprofessional in the school for about 5 years and is widely known and respected by other paraprofessionals as well as many faculty members.

(continued)

CONFIDENTIALITY SCENARIOS *(continued)*

Brian walks into the faculty lunchroom and sits down with several paraprofessionals and teachers. As he tunes into the discussion, he notices that the topic of conversation has to do with the student he supports. He hears several comments made about the student's family. As Brian is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, one of the teachers turns to him and asks, "Brian, is that true about Mrs. Smith?"

**Discussion:** How should Brian respond? What is Brian's responsibility in the specific situation? What is Brian's responsibility with his team afterward?

**Key:** Brian should respond. His response should explain that it would be a breach of confidentiality to respond to their inquiry. For example, he might say, "I'm not comfortable discussing the student's family life" or "It is my understanding that it would be a breach of confidentiality to discuss this type of information in this context." Brian should document the entire situation and discuss the incident with his team during the next scheduled meeting.

**Community helpers**

Pat is a paraprofessional who supports several students who have challenging behavior at the middle school. She has been a paraprofessional for many years. Pat is widely known in her community for her volunteer work at the local youth center.

One of the students that Pat supports attends the youth center regularly. One afternoon Pat notices that the student is beginning to have some difficulty managing some of his behaviors. Pat has learned several behavioral management techniques to support this student during school.

**Discussion:** What should Pat do? Should she intervene at the youth center with the behavioral management techniques that she learned at school? If so, when another volunteer asks her what she did and why she did it, should Pat describe the behavior management strategy?

**Key:** This situation is a bit more challenging. It is still inappropriate for Pat to discuss the specifics of the student's program with community members. As a volunteer who has responsibilities at the community center, Pat should approach the student's parents and voice her concerns. It is important to remember that Pat would do the same thing if the student did not have disabilities.