

Training Requirements for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Introduction

House Bill 325 (Massie), passed by the 2012 General Assembly, requires each school board, by September 1, 2014, to ensure that aides assigned to work with a teacher who has primary oversight of students with autism spectrum disorders receive training in student behavioral management within 60 days of assignment to such responsibility. School boards may provide such training to other employees, including transportation employees. The bill further specifies that the Board of Education, in consultation with Virginia Commonwealth University, shall develop online training that school divisions may use to fulfill the requirements of § 22.1-298.3 of the *Code of Virginia* and that the training shall be made available to local school divisions free of charge.

On January 10, 2013, the Virginia Board of Education adopted training standards that are available to school divisions. The document *Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders* describes a broad set of competencies needed by paraprofessionals who work with students with autism. The competencies contained in the document include those that are relevant to behavioral management, as specified in HB 325. These training standards have been developed in consultation with staff from the Autism Center for Excellence (ACE) at Virginia Commonwealth University. Training is available at VCU ACE <http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/>.

Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

General Autism Standards	
1.	Lists and explains the defining characteristics of autism (communication, patterns of stereotypical behavior, socialization, and social skill development) and the impact on the individual as defined by the Virginia Department of Education.
2.	Lists and explains the associated characteristics commonly present in autism (e.g., difficulties in sensory processing, motor skills, theory of mind, and imitation) and the impact on the individual.
3.	Lists and explains the associated cognitive characteristics and learning styles commonly present in autism (e.g., difficulties in executive functioning, attending, planning, abstract thinking, problem solving) and the impact on the individual.
4.	Describes the continuum of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the range of characteristics, abilities and learning needs that may be present.

Behavior Standards	
5.	Defines the term interfering behavior and identifies when interfering behavior is / is not present and when intervention is warranted.
6.	Explains the components of the behavior chain (setting event, antecedents, behavior, and consequences) and the impact on interfering behavior and identifies examples with students with ASD.
7.	Describes the relationship between communication and interfering behaviors and identifies examples with students with ASD.
8.	Lists the potential functions of interfering behaviors and identifies examples with students with ASD.

9.	Lists and describes the components of a positive behavior support plan and explains how each component can reduce interfering behavior while promoting the dignity and respect of the student.
10.	Implements proactive strategies designed to prevent the occurrence of interfering behaviors.
11.	Provides individualized positive reinforcement for demonstration of new skills designed to replace interfering behavior as well as the absence of interfering behaviors.
12.	Implements all components of a positive behavior support plan with consistency across all environments.
13.	Implements strategies to de-escalate a crisis situation to keep the student, self, and others safe as outlined by the student's intervention plan and division policies.
14.	Communicates any instances of crisis level interfering behaviors with the educational team immediately and reports the incident according to school and division policies.
15.	Provides the educational team with information regarding any areas of concern or changes in behavior.
16.	Observes behaviors and records data using objective measures and criteria to decrease the interfering behavior and increase the alternative and positive behaviors.

Communication Standards

17.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach receptive and expressive communication outlined in the student's goals and objectives.
18.	Provides numerous communication opportunities throughout the day to enable students to achieve communication goals through environmental arrangement, routines, peer interactions and motivational activities.
19.	Implements programs designed to enhance communication skills across all daily activities and with multiple communication partners to ensure generalization of skills.

20.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach and promote choice-making skills.
21.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach receptive communication skills which will enable a student to expand knowledge of vocabulary, follow directions and increase comprehension.
22.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach expressive communication skills which will enable a student to communicate effectively in his or her environment and increase positive interactions.
23.	Implements evidence-based practices to develop pragmatic communication skills.
24.	Implements appropriate augmentative communication interventions such as object or picture exchange systems, voice output communication devices, gestures, signs, and text, among others, to promote or enhance communication based on the student's goals and objectives.

Social Skills Standards	
25.	Uses evidence-based practices to teach social skills and to foster social interest and interactions outlined in the student's goals and objectives.
26.	Provides numerous opportunities throughout the day to work on social skills that enable students to achieve social goals.
27.	Implements programs designed to enhance social skills across all daily activities and with multiple social partners to ensure generalization of skills.
28.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach and promote the understanding and following of common social rules and norms.
29.	Implements evidence-based practices to teach and promote emotional development and emotional regulation as it relates to self as well as others.
30.	Supports interactions between peers and students with ASD providing relevant information and guidance to peers that will foster interactions and provide opportunities to learn social goals and objectives.

Comprehensive Instructional Programming Standards

31.	Provides intervention through a full range of instructional formats (e.g., one-to-one, small group, school/community interactions, and peer-mediated instruction).
32.	Implements a wide variety of evidence-based practices that effectively address the individual's goals and objectives.
33.	Implements prompting strategies and hierarchies that promote high rates of successful performance.
34.	Identifies individualized reinforcement preferences using indirect and direct measures on an ongoing basis.
35.	Provides appropriate reinforcement contingent on behavior, emphasizes the use of naturally occurring reinforcement, and fades systematically to support student independence.
36.	Delivers instruction that is clear, concise and appropriate for the student and ensures student understanding.
37.	Implements task analysis by breaking skills into small teachable parts and chaining steps of a task for skill acquisition.
38.	Implements instruction that promotes active engagement and maximizes opportunities for learning.
39.	Implements evidence-based practices with fidelity across all settings to foster generalization and maintenance of skills.
40.	Implements accommodations and/or modifications of tasks that effectively address the individual's goals and objectives.
41.	Utilizes adaptive equipment and assistive technology options that effectively address the individual's goals and objectives.

42.	Respects the needs, desires, and interests of the individual and families when implementing evidence-based practices and providing support to the individual.
43.	Collaborates with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team as evidenced by regular communication and participation in scheduled team meetings and informs the team of any areas of concern or changes in behavior.
44.	Implements and follows-up on team decisions and communicates results to the team.
45.	Observes behaviors and records data using objective measures and criteria.

Environmental Structure and Visual Supports Standards

46.	Assists in implementing safe environments that are free of hazards.
47.	Assists in implementing a positive climate that promotes respect for the individual.
48.	Implements a variety of visual supports and strategies to communicate information and expectations and increase independence of the student (e.g., break cards, rule cards, narratives, and scripts).
49.	Implements a daily schedule of activities that is individualized by length (e.g., full day, part day) and type (e.g., objects, photos, icons, words).
50.	Implements mini-schedules to help the individual participate in the environment and complete activities and routines independently.
51.	Uses visual supports and strategies to help the individual prepare for and complete transitions.
52.	Uses evidence-based practices to teach the individual the purpose of visual supports and how to use the visual supports independently.

Sensory Motor Development Standards

53.	Describes the basic function of the sensory system, impact that sensory processing has on learning and the potential differences for students with ASD.
54.	Implements sensory motor intervention plan with fidelity across all environments determined by the student's goals and the educational team.

Independence and Aptitude Standards

55.	Implements a variety of evidence-based practices to increase an individual's short-term and long-term independence in functional and daily living skills as outlined in his/her goals and objectives.
56.	Implements a variety of evidence-based practices to increase an individual's cognitive and learning abilities outlined in his/her goals and objectives.
57.	Implements a variety of evidence-based practices to increase an individual's academic skills outlined in his/her goals and objectives.
58.	Provides numerous opportunities throughout the day to work on independence and aptitude skills to enable students to achieve goals and foster generalization and maintenance of skills.