

Paraeducator Certification

Iowa's voluntary certification system for paraeducators is based on competencies that reflect the skills necessary for multiple paraeducator assignments. Although the certificates are not mandatory, the Iowa Department of Education strongly recommends that districts, area education agencies, and community colleges provide supports and opportunities to encourage paraeducators to obtain certificates appropriate to their roles. Paraeducators can earn certificates in the following categories:

- Level I Generalist PK-12
- Level II areas of concentration
 - ✓ Early Childhood PK-3
 - ✓ Special Needs PK-12
 - ✓ English as a Second Language PK-12
 - ✓ Career and Transition Programs: Grades 5-12
 - ✓ School Library Media PK-12
 - ✓ Speech – Language – Pathology PK-12
 - ✓ Vision Impairments – PK-12
- Level II Advanced PK-12

Additionally, paraeducators who work in special education settings and who hold a generalist certificate may complete coursework to serve as an authorized substitute for the teacher in their middle or high school special education assignment. The substitute option is not available for paraeducators serving in elementary special education assignments.

Resources on where to go and what to do

Programs for paraeducator certificates are available throughout Iowa at institutions whose programs have been approved by the State Board of Education. A list of the certification institutions can be found at

https://www.boee.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/rev_para_contacts_19-20.pdf.

Forms to apply for a paraeducator certificate or substitute authorization upon completion of the appropriate coursework can be found at <https://www.boee.iowa.gov/you-begin> under the category of “License Forms.”

Process and Certificates

In order to receive a paraeducator certificate, an individual must obtain a recommendation from the institution where the approved paraeducator program was completed. The recommendations are signed and forwarded to the State Board of Educational Examiners by the certifying official of the institution once the paraeducator candidate has demonstrated the competencies required for each certificate. Paraeducator certificates must be renewed every five years through completion of additional coursework. Paraeducators are encouraged to contact the Board of Educational Examiners for information on associated costs such as fees for application and background checks.