

CHAPTER 80  
STANDARDS FOR PARAEDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 4/10/29

**281—80.1(272) Definitions.** The following definitions apply to this chapter:

*“Authorized official”* means an individual with the authority within the institution and the unit to monitor and ensure compliance with this chapter.

1. If the unit is within a community college, an institution of higher education under the state board of regents, or an accredited private institution of higher education, the official must maintain, oversee, and be responsible for the program within the unit.

2. If the unit is within an Iowa public school district or area education agency, the official must have one or more of the following credentials issued by the board of educational examiners: a teacher license (with the exception of a substitute teaching license), an administrator license, a professional services license, an elementary professional school counselor endorsement, a secondary professional school counselor endorsement, a school nurse endorsement, a special education support personnel authorization, or a statement of professional recognition. Other authorizations or certificates issued by the board of educational examiners do not satisfy the terms of this paragraph.

*“Department”* means the department of education.

*“Director”* means the director of the department of education.

*“Diverse groups”* means one or more groups of individuals possessing certain traits or characteristics, including but not limited to age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

*“Institution”* means an Iowa public school district, area education agency, community college, institution of higher education under the state board of regents or accredited private institution as defined in Iowa Code section 261.9(1) offering a paraeducator preparation program(s).

*“Paraeducator candidate”* means an individual who is enrolled in a paraeducator preparation program leading to certification as a generalist, a generalist with area(s) of concentration, or an advanced paraeducator.

*“Paraeducator preparation program”* means the program of paraeducator preparation leading to certification of paraeducators.

*“State board”* means Iowa state board of education.

*“Unit”* means the organizational entity within an institution with the responsibility of administering the paraeducator preparation program(s).

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24; ARC 9806C, IAB 12/10/25, effective 1/14/26]

**281—80.2(272) Institutions affected.** All institutions engaged in preparation of paraeducators and seeking state board approval of the institutions’ paraeducator preparation program(s) shall meet the standards contained in this chapter.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.3(272) Criteria for Iowa paraeducator preparation programs.** Each institution seeking approval of its paraeducator preparation program(s) will submit to the state board evidence of the extent to which the program meets the standards contained in this chapter. After the state board has approved an institution’s paraeducator preparation program(s), students who complete the program(s) may be recommended by the authorized official of that institution for issuance of the appropriate certificate.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.4(272) Application; approval of programs.** Approval of paraeducator preparation programs by the state board will be based on the recommendation of the director after study of the factual and evaluative evidence of record about each program in terms of the standards contained in this chapter. Approval, if granted, will be for a term of seven years; however, approval for a shorter term may be granted by the

state board if it determines conditions so warrant. If approval is not granted, the applicant institution will be advised concerning the areas in which improvement or changes appear to be essential for approval. In this case, the institution will be given the opportunity to present factual information concerning its programs at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the state board. The institution may also reapply at its discretion to provide evidence of the actions taken toward suggested improvement. Any application submitted under this rule is to be submitted by the authorized official.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.5(272) Periodic reports.** In addition to reports pursuant to this chapter, the department may ask institutions placed on the approved programs list to make periodic reports necessary to keep records of each paraeducator preparation program up to date, to provide information necessary to carry out research studies relating to paraeducator preparation, and for any other purpose the department deems advisable. Any reports submitted under this rule are to be submitted by the authorized official.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.6(272) Reevaluation of paraeducator preparation programs.** Each paraeducator preparation program will be reviewed and reevaluated at least once every seven years, at a shorter interval specified pursuant to rule 281—80.4(272), or at any time deemed necessary by the director. Recommendations as to whether to grant continued approval are governed by rule 281—80.4(272).

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.7(272) Approval of program changes.** Upon application by an institution, the director is authorized to approve minor additions to, or changes within, the institution's approved paraeducator preparation program. When an institution proposes revisions that exceed the primary scope of its program, the revisions become operative only after approval by the state board.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.8(272) Organizational and resource standards.** Organization and resources adequately support the preparation of paraeducator candidates to enable them to meet state standards in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.8(1)** The unit provides resources and support necessary for the delivery of a quality certification program, including resources to support a quality hands-on (clinical) experience and resources to support technological and instructional needs to enhance candidate learning.

**80.8(2)** The unit provides evidence of collaboration with members of the professional community, including the unit's advisory committee comprised of school administrators, classroom teachers, currently employed paraprofessionals and others, to design, deliver, and evaluate programs to prepare paraeducators.

**80.8(3)** The unit's use of staff in teaching roles is purposeful and managed to ensure integrity, quality, and continuity of the program(s).

**80.8(4)** The unit ensures that resources are equitable for all program components, regardless of delivery or location.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.9(272) Diversity standards.**

**80.9(1)** The unit will ensure that the paraeducator preparation program meets the following diversity standards:

*a.* The unit provides an environment and experiences to paraeducator candidates to support candidate growth in knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help diverse groups of PK-12 students learn.

*b.* The unit's plans, policies, and practices document its efforts in establishing and maintaining a diverse staff, climate, and paraeducator candidate pool that strives to represent the diverse makeup of the community at large.

**80.9(2)** In addition to the provisions of rule 281—80.11(272), the unit is to gather data about its implementation of this rule, use those data to make program improvements, and share those data and improvements with the schools and communities the unit serves.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.10(272) Faculty standards.** Unit staff qualifications and performance facilitate the unit's role in the preparation of a professional paraeducator in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.10(1)** The unit documents the alignment of teaching duties for each faculty member with that member's preparation, knowledge, experiences, and skills appropriate for training paraeducators to serve in a school setting.

**80.10(2)** The institution holds unit staff accountable for teaching the critical concepts and principles of the discipline.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.11(272) Program assessment and evaluation standards.** The unit's assessment system will appropriately monitor individual candidate performance and use that data in concert with other program information to improve the unit and its programs in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.11(1)** Each paraeducator candidate's knowledge and skills will be measured against state certification standards adopted by the board of educational examiners under Iowa Code section 272.12 and the unit's learning outcomes for any certificate for which the unit may recommend the candidate.

**80.11(2)** Programs will submit curriculum exhibits for approval by the department.

**80.11(3)** The unit will establish a standard of satisfactory performance of paraeducator candidates, which will comply with the following paragraphs:

- a. The unit uses measures for candidate assessment that are fair, reliable, and valid.
- b. The unit assesses candidates on their demonstration and attainment of unit standards.
- c. The unit uses a variety of assessment measures for assessment of candidates on each unit standard.
- d. The unit provides candidates with formative feedback on their progress toward attainment of unit standards.

**80.11(4)** The unit will conduct a survey of graduates and their employers to ensure that its graduates are well prepared for their assigned roles.

**80.11(5)** The unit will have a clearly defined, cohesive assessment system and regularly review, analyze, and revise its assessment practices.

**80.11(6)** The unit will collect and analyze aggregated candidate and program data, use those data to make program improvements, and share those data and improvements with stakeholders on a regular basis.

**80.11(7)** An annual report including a composite of evaluative data collected by the unit will be submitted to the department by September 30 of each year.

**80.11(8)** When it publicly reports data, the unit will comply with all applicable privacy laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. §1232g.

[ARC 7661C, IAB 3/6/24, effective 4/10/24]

**281—80.12(272) Clinical practice standards.** The unit and its school partners will provide clinical experience opportunities that assist candidates in becoming successful paraeducators in accordance with the provisions of this rule.

**80.12(1)** Paraeducator clinical experiences support learning in the context in which paraeducators will practice.

**80.12(2)** Paraeducator clinical experiences include the following:

- a. A minimum of ten hours of experience in a state-approved school or educational facility under the supervision of a licensed educator.
- b. Opportunities for paraeducator candidates to observe and be observed by others in the application of skills and knowledge.

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