

**Wayne RESA Special Education and Early  
Intervention Services  
Act 18 Independence Paraprofessional (IP) Guidance**

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Purpose .....  | 2  |
| Act 18 Funding .....   | 2  |
| Eligibility .....  | 2  |
| IP Process .....   | 3  |
| District Actions .....   | 3  |
| IP Request Process .....   | 3  |
| Completing the Required Documentation .....                            | 3  |
| Determination Worksheet .....  | 3  |
| Determination Rubric .....   | 4  |
| Behavior Data Collection.....  | 4  |
| Moderate behavior challenges look like.....                            | 4  |
| Severe behavior challenges look like... ..                             | 5  |
| Important to Remember... ..  | 5  |
| Collecting Data on Tiered Interventions .....                          | 5  |
| Tips.....  | 6  |
| Professional Support for IPs.....                                      | 6  |
| Coaching.....  | 6  |
| Monitoring.....  | 6  |
| Support .....  | 6  |
| Appendix A .....   | 8  |
| Documentation Checklist for an Independence Paraprofessional .....     | 8  |
| Appendix B.....  | 9  |
| Documentation Checklist for an ECP Independence Paraprofessional ..... | 9  |
| Appendix C.....  | 10 |
| Sample Letter for Independence Paraprofessional Request .....          | 10 |

## Purpose

The focus of the Independence Paraprofessional (IP) is to increase the independence and success of students with moderate to severe disabilities within the least restrictive environment (LRE), support the most effective and efficient utilization of independence paraprofessionals (IPs), provide the district flexibility in the utilization and deployment of IPs, simplify the process, and shift WRESA's focus to providing more training and support for district staff for encouraging on-going development of student independence.

Wayne RESA encourages every district to review their data and engage their teams in data driven discussions to determine how to deploy their IPs effectively and efficiently. In alignment with increasing student independence and maintaining a student's least restrictive environment, Wayne RESA highly encourages districts to consider shifting to program, building, and/or classroom paraprofessional support and implementing one on one paraprofessionals only in extenuating cases that require intense support.

Information regarding Independence Paraprofessionals (IPs) can be found here: <https://www.resa.net/special-education/parapro-resources/>

## Act 18 Funding

The IEP team decides the need for additional adult support. Wayne RESA **only** determines if the student(s) meet the moderate to severe criteria for Act 18 IP funding reimbursement. If the student does not meet Act 18 IP funding criteria, it is the district's responsibility to fund the necessary support.

The district's costs will be documented in a cost report three times per year. The cost report will be emailed from WRESA to the district at least two weeks prior to the due date. Cost reports will require student information, FTE for each IP, the name of the IP, start date of the IP, and the estimated salary and benefits for each IP. The district will complete the report and email it to [Act18ip@resa.net](mailto:Act18ip@resa.net). Districts must have an Act 18 Agreement signed and on-file with Wayne RESA to be eligible for reimbursement.

Wayne RESA's decision does not supersede the IEP team decision for support, but is intended to identify if Wayne RESA will reimburse the costs of the IP.

## Eligibility

Independence Paraprofessionals (IPs) are funded by Wayne RESA to keep Act 18 eligible students in their least restrictive environment (LRE). IPs supports student access to the general education setting and are based on IEP team decisions, identifying the need for additional adult support for the student to access their LRE. The ACT 18 Independence Paraprofessional (IP) is available for students who meet the criteria for **moderate/severe** in the following approved eligibility areas:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Cognitive Impairment (CI)
- Emotional Impairment (EI) \*severe only
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI) \*high medical risk only
- Physical Impairment (PI)

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Visual Impairment (VI)

### **IP Process**

Districts will need to complete and submit the following documentation to Wayne RESA to be eligible to receive the district's allocation:

1. District IP Assurance Statement
2. District IP Deployment Plan
3. District professional development needs related to the implementation of IP support
4. Initial district IP Summary Cost Report

Special Education Directors and School Business Officials receive an email notification of the district's allocation. The Assurance Statement (IP Deployment Plan, professional development request, and identification of professional staff forms) and a template of the Initial district IP Summary Cost Report are attached to the email.

### **District Actions**

- Complete a Summary Spreadsheet/Cost Report of IP Requests at the beginning of the year
- Complete the Assurance Statement for the IP Requests at the beginning of the year
- A team (led by an administrator or designee) reviews the student's file and completes the required documents and submits them to Wayne RESA.
- Wayne RESA will make a determination for funding. Wayne RESA's decision does not remove the obligation of the district IEP team to provide FAPE to the student.

### **IP Request Process**

In order to request funding for an Independence Paraprofessional, the district must submit the required documents to Wayne RESA (see Appendices). Completed packets must be received and sent to [act18ip@resa.net](mailto:act18ip@resa.net). Incomplete packets will be returned.

Districts should also maintain required documentation in the district and have it available for review. In addition, districts should be prepared to make staff and files available for follow-up on-site visits by Wayne RESA staff, if requested.

### **Completing the Required Documentation**

#### **Determination Worksheet**

- Completed by the team and sent in with the request for an IP
- Maintained in the district file
- Utilized to help determine if the student needs an IP and determine the needed FTE
- Utilized as a resource in team meetings to guide the team's discussion, planning and review of the support provided by the IP

## **Determination Rubric**

### *Physical Support*

Students with temporary or permanent physical disabilities who require ongoing adult support to access the curriculum, or the educational environment may be approved for an IP. An IP should only be requested for students who need extensive and frequent support for a moderate/severe physical disability.

Students should be given the opportunity to independently complete physical tasks with accommodations or modifications prior to requesting IP support.

Please see the IP Determination Rubric for more information.

### *Outreach Statements*

- Completed by an Outreach Teacher Consultant (TC)
- Written on the TC's district letterhead
- Paragraph indicating student's current needs and status
- Statement that supports the IP assignment
- Outreach staff member's signature and date
- Recommendation for FTE
- All new submissions require TC statements sent to Wayne RESA

### *Academic Support*

Students with a moderate/severe visual impairment, hearing impairment, or physical impairment who require extensive and frequent adult support to access the general education curriculum may be approved for an IP. An IP should only be requested for students whose academic support needs go beyond the regular accommodations/modifications required for good instruction. An IP supports appropriate academic instruction. Please see the IP Determination Rubric for more information.

### *Behavior Support*

Students with **severe** behavior challenges may be approved for an IP only after all other less intrusive PBIS Tier 1 & 2 supports have been implemented with fidelity over a period of time. An IP helps support an appropriate LRE placement, but an IP cannot make up for an inappropriate placement. An IP supports appropriate behavior instruction and should be considered as a temporary support provided to help teach self- management/regulation skills.

## **Behavior Data Collection**

### **Moderate behavior challenges look like...**

- Frequent and/or intense adult support necessary to initiate and continue engagement in the learning environment
- Disruptive behaviors that require the student to be removed from the learning environment on a weekly basis

- Weekly physical aggression incident reports
- Potential injury to self and others
- Elopement concerns
- Moderate disability needing redirection

Many IP requests are for students that have a moderate disability.

### **Severe behavior challenges look like...**

- Behavior is dangerous, highly disruptive, or threatens student's placement
- BIP (PBIS Plan) requires daily direct instruction to ensure effective implementation
- Daily or hourly intense adult support required to initiate and continue engagement in the learning environment
- Disruptive behaviors that require the student to be removed from the learning environment multiple times during the week
- Physical aggression incident reports multiple times during the week
- Potential injury to self and others
- High frequency elopement requires close proximity
- Physical aggression on a daily basis
- Consistent wrap-around meetings and supports

### **Important to Remember...**

- Data collection should enhance our ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the IP and the interventions.
- An IP needs training on what data to collect and how to collect the data.
- Data collection must be accompanied by summarizing and analyzing the data.
- Regular behavior reviews with data analysis are a part of an ongoing FBA process.
- The Behavior Review Meeting Summary allows teams to come together for data analysis and make needed changes to the student's behavior plan and IP support.

### **Collecting Data on Tiered Interventions**

- Tier 2 Interventions:
  - Check In/Check Out (CICO)
    - CICO daily and weekly data summaries can be used to collect CICO data.
  - Take A Break
  - Targeted Social Skills Instruction
  - Token Systems
    - Weekly scatterplots can be used to record how many token exchanges a student earns, how often they use a targeted social skill, or how often they take a break.
- Tier 3 Interventions:
  - Emergency Interventions (Emergency Seclusion and Emergency Physical Restraint)
  - Wraparound
  - FBA/PBIS plans

## **Tips**

### *Check In/Check Out Data*

- Part of the Check In/Check Out Tier 2 Intervention.
- Data is shared with the student on a daily basis.
- Data is shared with the Tier 2 Team/Support Team on a regular basis.
- Check In/Check Out data is reviewed at the Behavior Review Meeting.

### *Tokens*

- Teach the token system to staff AND to the student
- Agreement on how students earn tokens – be very specific and consistent – EVERYBODY follows the plan
- Do not take tokens away as a consequence
- Provide token immediately or at scheduled time – let student know why they received the token/social reinforcement

For all data, teams should graph scatterplot data on an individual data summary form in an easy to read format. More guidance and sample templates can be found here:

<https://www.resa.net/educational-resources/pbis/>

## **Professional Support for IPs**

Professional development and support are key to the success of Independence Paraprofessionals. Teams should commit to supporting all staff, including IPs, through targeted professional development so they are equipped to support our students. Some examples of support are below.

### **Coaching**

- Periodically observe the IP working with the student in multiple environments, as appropriate (e.g., general education, special education, non-classroom)
- Provide feedback to the IP regarding his/her implementation of the outlined intervention strategies

### **Monitoring**

- Check for the IPs understanding and implementation of the student's IEP, Determination Worksheet and Support Review Form
- Provide ongoing instruction and feedback to the IP regarding data collection procedures

### **Support**

- Meet with the IP on a regular and ongoing basis
- Utilize the Determination Worksheet and Support Review Form in guiding team meetings and discussion

- Maintain an open line of communication with the IP; be available to answer questions, solicit the input of the IP and provide resources and background information, as appropriate
- Provide feedback and recommendations regarding the most effective utilization of the IP

## Appendix A

### Documentation Checklist for an Independence Paraprofessional

Please check the boxes to complete this document and attach it to the request.

- Support letter on district letterhead, signed by the superintendent and special education administrator, identifying the need with a rationale
- Student profile
- IP Determination Worksheet
- Updated IP summary spreadsheet
- Current IEP, MET/REED
- Up-to-date behavior and/or medical data and plan
  - o [Sample Documents and Guidance](#)
- Other information pertinent to the request, such as:
  - IP Determination severity rubric
  - IP support review form
  - Outreach statement

## Appendix B

### Documentation Checklist for an ECP Independence Paraprofessional

Please check the boxes to complete this document and attach it to the request.

- Support letter on district letterhead, signed by the superintendent and special education administrator, identifying the need with a rationale.
- LRE schedule for use of the para, identifying the allocation of FTE per student (i.e. 10 students all being supported equally would be 0.10 FTE per student).
- IP Determination Worksheet.
- IFSP/IEPs for all the students.
- Any other relevant data:
- Behavior plans (if applicable)
- Medical plans (if applicable)

**Appendix C**

**Sample Letter for Independence Paraprofessional Request**

DATE

Wayne RESA,

XXX is requesting funding to support an Independence Paraprofessional (IP) for (insert student name) due to (insert rationale). We have included the required documents for your review.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Resident District Special Education Director Name  
Resident District Title of Person Signing  
Resident District Contact Information

Resident District Special Education Director Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Resident District Superintendent Signature \_\_\_\_\_



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