

PERSONNEL STANDARDS

I. STATE POLICY

The Arkansas Department of Education assures that policies and procedures are set forth relating to standards to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out the purposes of this part [34 CFR 300.136] are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. [34 CFR 300.136(b)(1)(i)]

The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes the need for teachers and other educational personnel to be trained in sufficient numbers and with sufficient skills to address the wide variety of needs presented by children with disabilities. To ensure that personnel are appropriately prepared, the SEA has a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) which includes the establishment of cooperative relationships with institutions of higher education in the State that offer teacher preparation programs. Additionally, the ADE has undertaken the development of a program of ongoing inservice training for those professionals already employed in educational settings, which requires that each individual licensed by the ADE attain 30 clock hours of continuing professional education annually in order to renew licensure. [See Part III, Section XI, Comprehensive System of Personnel Development, of these eligibility documents.]

Each public education agency within the State must implement a comprehensive system of personnel development that is designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified special education, regular education, and related services personnel.

Each public agency shall ensure that all personnel necessary to carry out Part B of the IDEA within the jurisdiction of the agency are appropriately and adequately prepared. Specifically, in the provision of special education and related services, each public agency shall employ and/or enter into a professional services contract with individuals who hold a valid license from the State Board of Education or, as appropriate, another licensure Board with authority under State statute to issue such a license.

It is the policy of the Arkansas Department of Education that local educational agencies in the State make an ongoing good-faith effort to recruit and hire appropriately and adequately trained personnel to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities, including, in a geographic area of the State where there is a shortage of such personnel, the most qualified individuals available who are making satisfactory progress toward completing applicable course work necessary to meet the standards established by the State, consistent with State law, and the steps in the process established by the SEA for attaining appropriate professional requirements in the State within three years.

Public agencies may only use paraprofessionals and assistants in the provision of special education and related services who are appropriately trained and supervised in accordance with guidelines established by the Department.

II. STATE PROCEDURES

The ADE has established a process and procedures to address personnel standards. In carrying out the requirements of 34 CFR 300.136, the Arkansas Department of Education assures the following -

- A. The establishment and maintenance of standards that are consistent with any State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which a person is providing special education or related services. [34 CFR 300.136(b)(1)(ii)]
- B. To the extent that the State's standards for a profession or discipline, including standards for temporary or emergency certification, are not based on the highest requirements in the State applicable to a specific profession or discipline, the State's eligibility documents under Part B of the IDEA shall include the steps the State is taking and the procedures for notifying public agencies and personnel of those steps and the timelines it has established for the retraining or hiring of personnel to meet appropriate professional requirements in the State. [34 CFR 300.136(c)]
- C. In meeting the requirements of 34 CFR 300.136 a determination shall be made about the status of personnel standards in the State. That determination is based on current information that accurately describes, for each profession or discipline in which personnel are providing special education or related services, whether the applicable standards are consistent with the highest requirements in the State for that profession or discipline. [34 CFR 300.136(d)(1)]
- D. All such information described above shall be on file in the State educational agency, and available to the public. [34 CFR 300.136(d)(2)]
- E. In identifying the highest requirements in the State, the requirements of all State statutes and the rules of all State agencies applicable to serving children and youth with disabilities shall be considered. [34 CFR 300.136(e)]
- F. The Arkansas Department of Education allows paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulations, or written policy, in meeting the requirements of this part to be used to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities under Part B of the IDEA. [34 CFR 300.136(f)]

III. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

In compliance with the IDEA-B requirements at 34 CFR 300.136, the following information is provided regarding the standards established for personnel carrying out the purpose of IDEA-B.

- A. **Qualified Examiners:** Licensed psychological examiners, psychology specialists, educational examiners, and professional and associate counselors are among the groups of persons the Arkansas Department of Education recognizes as qualified to administer some or all tests used in student evaluation. Each of these groups is licensed at the same level, which includes a Master's Degree and a competency examination. Additionally, the licensed teacher of

school counselor may administer tests which do not require special training, certification or licensure, i.e., achievement tests.

- B. Psychologists:** The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes the licensure by the State Board of Examiners in Psychology. This is the only state standard for the practice of psychologists.
- C. Occupational and Physical Therapists:** The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes the licensure by the respective boards of licensure for each of these groups. This is the only state standard for these professionals. Both require the same level of training and a competency examination.
- D. Audiologists:** The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes the licensure by the Arkansas Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. There is only one standard for this professional position.
- E. Regular (General) Education Teachers:** The State Board of Education licenses all teachers, and there is only one standard.
- F. Physical Education Teachers:** The State Board of Education certifies physical education instructors. There is only one standard.
- G. Administrators:** There are three basic types of administrators involved in the implementation of IDEA-B. These are general school administrator (superintendent), principal and special education supervisor. Each of these is licensed by the State Board of Education. There is only one standard for each of these positions.

When the person assuming the role of special education supervisor is not fully licensed, provisions are made for a "phase-in" of the licensing requirements.

- H. Special Education Teachers:** All special education teachers meet the same standard and are licensed by the State Board of Education. For teachers of special education there are State Board adopted procedures for a "phase-in" of the licensure in special education.
- I. Speech-Language Pathologists:** The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes licensure by the Arkansas Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (ABESPA), as well as licensure by the State Board of Education. The standard established by the State Board of Education for Speech-Language Pathologists is considered to be equivalent to the standard for licensure established by the ABESPA, that being a Master's degree.

The State Board of Education currently issues two types of licensure in speech-language pathology. One of these, "Speech Therapist," is not available to new applicants for licensure. It has been renewable only to those persons licensed prior to September 1, 1981, and is only renewable if it has not been allowed to expire. The "Speech Therapist" license was issued on the basis of either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree in Speech Pathology. Most individuals originally holding this license have either been reclassified based on their Master's degree or have upgraded from a Bachelor's degree to the second type of licensure, the "Speech-Language Pathologist," which is based on a Master's degree. This is the only license available to new applicants.

The SEA has provided financial assistance to those wishing to upgrade to the Master's level as part of its effort to recruit and retain qualified providers. Additionally, the State Board of Education has established a July 1, 2010 date after which school districts may only employ individuals issued credentials on the basis of a Master's degree for the provision of speech-language pathology services in the public schools. To accomplish this, the Arkansas Department of Education assures that it will take the following steps -

1. The ADE will continue its practice, begun in July of 1993, of setting aside a portion of the 20% funds under Part B of the IDEA to provide stipends to individuals currently holding the "Speech Therapist" license based upon a Bachelor's degree to upgrade to the Master's level.
 2. The ADE will work with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to ensure course offerings are available statewide. This activity is in process and is ongoing.
- J. **Medical Personnel:** The Arkansas Department of Education recognizes the licensure of these personnel by the appropriate state Medical Board.
- K. **Early Childhood Special Education Teacher:** The State Board of Education licenses all early childhood special education teachers, and there is only one standard.
- L. **Paraprofessionals:** Public agencies may only use paraprofessionals in the provision of special education and related services who are appropriately trained and supervised in accordance with guidelines established by the ADE.
- M. **Speech-Language Pathology Assistants:** Public agencies may only use speech-language pathology assistants who have been approved by the ADE, Special Education Unit in accordance with a written agreement between the ADE, Special Education Unit and the Arkansas Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology (ABESPA).
- N. **Speech-Language Pathology Aides:** Public agencies may only use speech-language pathology aides who have been approved by the ADE, Special Education Unit in accordance with a written agreement between the ADE, Special Education Unit and the ABESPA.
- O. **Educational Interpreters/Transliterators for the Deaf:** Public agencies employing Educational Interpreters/Transliterators for the Deaf must comply with guidelines published by the ADE.