



Summary

In 2015, a group of advocates work to change Minnesota law to require that school paraprofessionals receive disability-specific training related to the children that they are serving. This includes receiving training on FASD when they are serving children impacted by prenatal alcohol exposure.

Purpose

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that as many as 1 in 20 U.S. school children may have a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. FASD is a condition that can make school difficult. It is not uncommon for students with an FASD to experience significant school disruption, which has been defined as learning disabilities, bullying, truancy, suspension, expulsion and school drop out. It is important that teachers and paraprofessionals are educated on the spectrum and equipped with knowledge, understanding, and strategies for supporting students and families impacted by an FASD.

Model Legislation

Section 1. {Title.} SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL TRAINING REQUIREMENT.

(A) For all paraprofessionals employed to work in programs whose role in part is to provide direct support to students with disabilities, the school board in each district shall ensure that:

(1) before or beginning at the time of employment, each paraprofessional must develop sufficient knowledge and skills in emergency procedures, building orientation, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, vulnerability, and reportability, among other things, to begin meeting the needs, especially disability-specific and behavioral needs, of the students with whom the paraprofessional works;

(2) annual training opportunities are required to enable the paraprofessional to continue to further develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the paraprofessional works, including understanding disabilities, the unique and individual needs of each student according to the student's disability and how the disability affects the student's education and behavior, following lesson plans, and implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities; and

(3) a districtwide process obligates each paraprofessional to work under the ongoing direction of a licensed teacher and, where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.