



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

February 15, 2013

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Training Requirements and Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

House Bill 325, passed by the 2012 General Assembly, requires each school board, by September 1, 2014, to ensure that aides assigned to work with a teacher who has primary oversight of students with autism spectrum disorders receive training in student behavioral management within 60 days of assignment to such responsibility. School boards may provide such training to other employees, including transportation employees. The bill further specifies that the Board of Education, in consultation with Virginia Commonwealth University, shall develop online training that school divisions may use to fulfill the requirements of § 22.1-298.3 of the *Code of Virginia* and that the training shall be made available to local school divisions free of charge.

On January 10, 2013, the Virginia Board of Education adopted training standards that are available to school divisions. The attached document, [*Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders \(Training Standards\)*](#), describes a broad set of competencies needed by paraprofessionals who work with students with autism. The competencies contained in the document include those that are relevant to behavioral management, as specified in HB 325. Because behavior management is complex, competencies to be demonstrated include those beyond basic fundamentals of behavior, but include principles and strategies to reduce interfering behavior and build positive skills, enhance communication, and deliver individualized instruction. The *Training Standards* have been developed in consultation with staff from the Autism Center for Excellence (ACE) at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Training may be delivered to paraprofessionals through external sources, such as college coursework or online courses provided by educational agencies, or may be developed and delivered through internal means within the division provided such training successfully covers the *Training Standards*. To assist school divisions in training efforts, the ACE is currently implementing online delivery of instructional modules that will incorporate the competencies addressed in the standards, at no charge to school divisions. Information about this course can be found at <http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/parapro/index.cfm>.

The *Training Standards* document is available on the Web sites at the Virginia Department of Education <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/> and Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence (VCU-ACE) <http://www.vcuautismcenter.org/>.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Selena Layden at smjoy@vcu.edu, Training Coordinator, at VCU-ACE or by phone 804-828-9548.

PIW/PA/dj

Attachment:

- a. [Training Standards for Paraprofessionals Assigned to Work with a Teacher Who Has Primary Oversight of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders](#) (Word)