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wvde.us

MEMORANDUM

To: County Special Education Administrators
County Personnel Directors
WV Autism Training Center

FROM: Sheila Paitsel, Director, Special Education *SP*
Office of Federal Programs and Support

RE: Autism Mentor Classification- Qualification Process

DATE: September 17, 2021

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information on the requirements that apply to Autism Mentors and a description of the West Virginia Department of Education's responsibilities in the implementation of the Autism Mentor policy, which was adopted by the West Virginia Board of Education in 1992 and revised in 2013. Policy 5314.01: *Autism Mentor* established the mandatory standards and experiences necessary to qualify for the service personnel class title of "Autism Mentor." A copy of Policy 5314.01 is attached for your information.

The Autism Mentor standards include:

- 1. Meet the qualifications of "Aide III" as delineated in West Virginia Code 18A-4-8.**
Aide III means those personnel selected and trained for teacher-aide classifications such as monitor aide, clerical aide, classroom aide or general aide, and who hold a high school diploma or a general educational certificate and have completed six semester hours of college credit at an institution of higher education or are employed as an aide in a special education program and have one year's experience as an aide in special education. The local education agency is responsible for verifying this standard.
- 2. Successful completion of staff development program related to providing instructional supports to students with autism as determined by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and delineated in WVDE's Autism Spectrum Disorders: Services in West Virginia Schools.**
To become an Autism Mentor, an aide must earn at a minimum, 15 points for participation in relevant staff development, which must include an overview of autism and positive behavior interventions and support strategies. Documentation of the individual's number of earned points must be on file in the Office of Special Education at the WVDE. The revised policy also delineates that training is required on the use of restraint and must include prevention and de-escalation techniques with alternatives to the use of restraint.
- 3. Two years of successful experience, providing classroom instructional supports to students with autism.**
The local education agency is responsible for verifying this standard.
- 4. Physical ability and stamina necessary to complete all job tasks, including tasks related to ensuring student safety.** The local education agency is responsible for verifying this standard.

Should you have any additional questions feel free to contact Jennifer Anderson, M.A. NBCT by phone at (304)-558-2696 or by email at jennifer.anderson@k12.wv.us.

SP:ja
Attachments (4)

Attachment 1

PROCEDURES FOR VERIFICATION FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

An aide pursuing the autism mentor classification must submit to the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE), Office of Special Education, the following documentation to complete the staff development standard:

1. Application for Standard #2 Verification listing the trainings, workshops, or conferences attended, the number of points or hours awarded for each specific staff development experience, and the total number of points or hours earned.
2. Verification of participation regarding staff development attended;
 - a) A description of the session content (e.g., conference flyer or agenda); or
 - b) A Certificate of Attendance/Participation, including participant's name, title, and sponsor (such as Autism Training Center) of workshop, date(s), and length (i.e., number of hours) of workshop, and signature(s) of presenter(s); and
 - c) Personal mailing address; and
 - d) Name of employer (local education agency).

The staff development documentation is reviewed, and points awarded for participation. One-half of a point is awarded for each hour of participation. An aide must earn a minimum of 15 points, or 30 hours, for staff development completed within the past three consecutive years. Upon completion of the analysis of the documentation submitted, the employee, the LEA personnel director, and LEA special education director will receive a letter verifying whether the state requirements for Standard 2 have been met. Once an individual has met Standard 2 by earning the required 15 staff development points (30 hours) as verified by the WVDE, it is no longer necessary to submit additional documentation to the Office of Special Education.

The WVDE does not issue certificates or other verification stating that an individual has met all the requirements to become an Autism Mentor. The school district is responsible for verifying three of the four applicable standards. Therefore, it is the school district's responsibility to determine when an individual has met all the requirements to become an Autism Mentor.

Submit via U.S. Postal Service, fax, or email the Standard 2 Application with supporting documentation of participation in staff development workshops/conferences to:

Jennifer Anderson, M.A. NBCT, Autism Coordinator
West Virginia Department of Education, Special Education
Office of Federal Programs and Support
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Building 6, Suite 750
Charleston, WV 25305
Phone: 304-558-2696
Fax: 304-558-1834
Email: jennifer.anderson@k12.wv.us

Attachment 2

AUTISM MENTOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

WVDE staff in collaboration with experts in the field of autism, reviewed competencies necessary to provide appropriate support services to students with autism. Because of that review, the WVDE requires that the staff development experiences for Autism Mentor include the following areas:

1. Overview of autism
 - A. Definition of autism
 - B. Characteristics of autism
2. Transition and integration techniques
3. Functional analysis or assessment of behaviors
4. Assessment of the environment
5. Positive behavior interventions and supports
6. Data collection techniques
7. Understanding and enhancing communication and language
 - A. Augmentative
 - B. Vocal
 - C. Sign
 - D. Picture/Symbols
 - E. Others
8. Other areas related to working with students with autism
9. Community resources
10. Social skills training

There are currently a variety of staff development opportunities available in the field of autism that can result in the knowledge and skills necessary to provide appropriate support services to students with autism. Individuals who desire to be Autism Mentors should participate in workshops/conferences that cover a variety of topics and presenters to develop a broad base of knowledge.

The following is a list of organizations and agencies that periodically conduct workshops/ conferences in West Virginia on topics related to autism. This list is not exhaustive and may be updated, when necessary.

- Autism Society of West Virginia Annual Conference
- Autism Training Center, Huntington, WV - A variety of workshops throughout year
- West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Disabilities, Morgantown
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports workshops offered through-out the year
- Autism trainings offered by the WVDE Autism Coordinator
- Celebrating Connections Early Childhood Conference offers sessions regarding autism
- Camp Gizmo: an assistive technology camp for young children
- WV Training Connections and Resources

Marshall University, Huntington Introduction to Autism – Semester course (10 points for completion of course)

**TITLE 126
LEGISLATIVE RULE
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**SERIES 146A
AUTISM MENTOR (5314.01)**

§126-146A-1. General.

1.1. Scope. - This policy provides the mandated standards for the service personnel class title "Autism Mentor".

1.2. Authority. - W. Va. Constitution, Article XII, Section 2, and W. Va. Code §18-2-5 and §18A-4-8.

1.3. Filing Date. - April 11, 2013.

1.4. Effective Date. - May 13, 2013.

1.5. Repeal of Former Rule. - This legislative rule repeals and replaces W. Va. 126CSR146A, West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5314.01, Autism Mentor, filed August 25, 1992, and effective September 26, 1992.

§126-146A-2. Purpose.

2.1. The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for the position of Autism Mentor.

§126-146A-3. Standards and Experience.

3.1. Meet the qualifications of "Aide III" as delineated in W. Va. Code §18A-4-8.

3.1.a. The Local Educational Agency (LEA) is responsible for verifying this standard and documentation is to be maintained in the aide's personnel file.

3.2. Successful completion of a staff development program related to providing instructional supports to students with autism as determined by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and delineated in the WVDE's *Guidelines for Best Practices Autism Spectrum Disorders: Services in West Virginia Schools*.

3.2.a. The WVDE is responsible for verifying this standard.

3.2.a.1. For each hour of training completed, one-half point per hour will be awarded.

3.2.a.2. A minimum of 15 points (or 30 hours of training) must be earned and verified in order for a candidate to meet this requirement.

3.2.a.3. Training is required on the use of restraint and must include prevention and de-escalation techniques with alternatives to the use of restraint.

3.2.a.4. Training must have been completed within a three-year period and documentation submitted to the Office of Special Programs for review and consideration. Training over three years old will not be considered.

3.2.a.5. Points awarded for this item will be determined by the Office of Special Programs after proper documentation of approved training is submitted to the WVDE.

3.2.a.6. The documentation shall, at a minimum, include the name of training, date of training, number of hours, agency providing training and shall include the signature of the training sponsor or designee.

3.2.b. Upon completion of the analysis of the documentation submitted, the employee and LEA personnel director will receive a letter verifying whether the state requirements for this standard have been met.

3.3. Two (2) years of successful experience providing classroom instructional supports to a student(s) with autism under the supervision of a fully certified special education teacher.

3.3.a. The LEA is responsible for verifying this standard.

3.3.b. A year is defined as a minimum of 133 instructional days in any one school year, verified at the end of the school year.

3.3.c. A student must be an eligible student with autism for the time the aide provided instructional supports in order for the experience to be counted. The student's eligibility as a student with autism is determined and documented by the Eligibility Committee (EC) in accordance with W. Va. 126CSR16 West Virginia Board of Education Policy 2419: *Regulations for the Education of Students with Exceptionalities*. If a student had a change in EC determination to or from autism while the aide was providing instructional supports, the aide will receive credit only for experience during the time the student was an eligible student with autism as determined by the EC.

3.3.d. Dates for the time period for which credit for working with students with autism is requested must be documented.

3.3.e. Documentation of this standard is to be kept in the aide's personnel file.

3.4. Physical ability and stamina necessary to complete all job tasks, including tasks related to ensuring student safety.

3.4.a. The LEA is responsible for verifying this standard.

3.4.b. Documentation of this standard is to be kept in the aide's personnel file.

3.5. Upon completion of the requirements delineated in this policy and when standards have been verified as met, an aide is eligible to apply for the position of autism mentor.

3.5.a. To receive the autism mentor, pay grade, an aide must be employed in an autism mentor position.

§126-146A-4. Severability.

4.1. If any provision of this rule or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this rule.

Attachment 4



West Virginia DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Autism Mentor Standard 2 Verification Form

Date Submitted: _____

Name of Applicant: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

County: _____ Contact Phone #: _____

Special Education Director: _____ Email: _____

Personnel Director: _____ Email: _____

Staff Development Documentation –Total of 30 Hours Required

Prevention and De-Escalation Techniques with Alternative to Restraint (Required)

Date of Training: _____ Number of Hours: _____

Agency Providing Training: _____

Staff Development Related to Providing Instructional Support to Students with Autism

Title of Training: _____

Date of Training: _____ Number of Hours: _____

Agency Provided Training: _____

Title of Training: _____

Date of Training: _____ Number of Hours: _____

Agency Providing Training: _____

Title of Training: _____

Date of Training: _____ Number of Hours: _____

Agency Provided Training: _____

***If additional space is needed, please attach additional forms.

***Signed training agenda or certificates by trainers or designees