

Facts for Paraeducators

GUIDELINES FOR LOCAL LEADERS

Violence

Paraeducators often work with students whose behavior puts them, other students and staff at risk of harm. Paraeducators share in the responsibility for the safety of children under their supervision. That responsibility extends to protecting or reducing the severity of potential student injuries, including those from fighting or assaults. Physical intervention is not required if it would create a physical danger to you. However, common sense and reasonableness require the use of steps such as:

- Calling for assistance; sending someone for help; or calling 911 if the altercation is out of control.
- Dispersing the crowd. By removing the audience, the motivation to fight may be reduced.
- Removing or pushing aside items from the area. This will reduce the risk of further injury due to falls. It will also keep students from using these objects as weapons.

You can protect yourself and minimize the risk of assault through your local association by:

- Ensuring that the child or children assigned to you have been properly classified.
- Seeking inservice training on topics such as:
 - Intervening safely in student fights and conflicts.
 - Reducing staff victimization.
 - Handling angry parents.
 - Weapons awareness.
- Joining or helping to form an association health and safety committee to work on these issues by:
 - Insisting the district follows procedures outlined in state law (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.1) – Assaults upon school employees and state law (N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2.2) – Assaults with weapons upon school employees.
- Ensuring that any school safety plan puts the full responsibility on the district for protecting employees, and involves administration and law enforcement.

Indoor Air Quality

Paraeducators spend most of their workdays in school buildings and offices. The World Health Organization estimates that approximately 30 percent of all buildings have an IAQ problem. Much research and attention has been focused on a whole host of indoor air contaminants and stressors in buildings. Formaldehyde, radon, bacteria, fungi, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, particulates, nitrogen oxides, ozone, fiberglass, tobacco smoke, temperature, humidity and poor ventilation top the list, and may be a cause of IAQ problems.

Employee symptoms associated with IAQ problems may include eye, nose, throat, and upper respiratory irritation, skin irritation or

rashes, chills, fever, cough, chest tightness, congestion, sneezing, runny nose, muscle aches, and pneumonia. Illnesses associated with IAQ problems include asthma, hypersensitivity, pneumonitis, multiple chemical sensitivity, and Legionnaires’ Disease.

How can IAQ Problems be corrected and/or prevented?

- Ensure an adequate outside air supply. The ventilation system should be operating at original design specifications.
- Eliminate or control known and potential sources of chemical and microbial air contamination.

HEALTH & SAFETY RESOURCES

Your NJEA UniServ Office

Region 1 – Galloway Twp.	Atlantic/Cape May
609 652 9200	
Region 2 – Mullica Hill	Cumberland/Gloucester/Salem
856 628 8650	
Region 3 – Voorhees	Burlington/Camden
856 234 2485	
Region 7 – Toms River	Ocean
732 349 0280	
Region 8 – Trenton	Mercer
609 896 3422	
Region 9 – Wall Twp.	Monmouth
732 403 8000	
Region 11/12 – Edison	Middlesex
732 287 4700	
Region 13 – Flemington	Hunterdon/Somerset/Warren
908 782 2168	
Region 15 – Cranford	Union
908 709 9440	
Region 17 – Parsippany	Morris/Sussex
973 515 0101	
Region 19 – West NY	Hudson – North
201 861 1266	
Region 20 – Jersey City	Hudson – South
201 653 6634	
Region 21 – Livingston	Essex
973 762 6866	
Region 23/25 – Hasbrouck Heights	Bergen
201 292 8093	
Region 27 – Wayne	Passaic
973 694 0154	
Region 29 – Trenton	Higher Education
609 689 9580	

Indoor Air Quality (continued)

What can be done if the air quality is unacceptable?

Through your local association:

- Conduct employee interviews to obtain pertinent information regarding what symptoms are being experienced, how many employees are affected, when they are affected, where they work, what they do, etc.
- Review building operations and maintenance procedures to determine when and what type of chemicals are being used during cleaning, floor waxing and stripping, painting, gluing, pesticide spraying, roofing operations, renovation and construction activities, etc. Also determine when deliveries occur since idling vehicles generate exhaust. New carpeting, upholstered furniture, partitions, etc. may give off chemical vapors for several months.

- Conduct a walk-through inspection to evaluate possible sources that may contribute to IAQ complaints.
- Inspect the heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system, window air conditioners, office dehumidifiers, etc., in order to determine if the systems are working properly and are in good condition.
- Check the schedule for cleaning any air filters present in the system.
- Review the building blueprints of the duct work and ventilation system to determine if the system is adequately designed.
- Conduct air sampling, if necessary, to determine if specific contaminants are present or if adequate fresh air is being supplied.
- Check compliance with the PEOSH Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Standard.

Bloodborne pathogens

Paraeducators often risk on-the-job contact with blood and other body fluids in their work with students. These materials may contain pathogens, organisms that can cause serious disease. The Bloodborne Pathogen Standard was created to protect employees with anticipated occupational exposure to these organisms.

What is the PEOSH Bloodborne Pathogen Standard?

In 1991, the federal OSHA adopted the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard that protects workers in the private sector who come in contact with blood or other body fluids that may cause serious disease. The following are of major concern:

- Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C virus (HCV)
- Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

In 1993, the federal OSHA Standard was adopted under the New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Act to protect public employees in New Jersey.

How does the law protect you?

- The employer must provide an exposure control plan that includes:
 - Job classifications of those responsible for clean-ups.

- Job classification task and procedures in which employees have occupational exposure.
- Schedule and methods for implementing the requirements of the standard.
- Procedures for documenting the circumstances surrounding exposure.
- Accessibility to employees and updated at least annually.
- Methods to prevent exposure:
 - Universal precautions requiring the handling of all potentially infectious materials as if they were contaminated.
 - Engineering controls used to contain or remove hazardous materials, such as puncture resistant containers or splash guards.
 - Work practice procedures and the equipment to implement them.
- Hepatitis B vaccinations for all employees who have anticipated exposure to blood or other bodily fluids.
- Medical evaluation and follow-up for all employees who are exposed.
- Employee training for all employees with the potential for exposure.
- Confidential records about employee exposures must be kept for the length of employment plus 30 years.

For more information

New Jersey Healthy School Facility Environments

<https://www.nj.gov/dep/school>

Access to the online resources of seven New Jersey state agencies and federal agencies on issues such as indoor air quality, mold, hazardous substances, and construction dust and noise.

EPA Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids

<https://www.epa.gov/schools>

EPA Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids is a gateway to online resources to help facility managers, school administrators, architects, design engineers, school nurses, parents, teachers and other staff to address environmental health issues in schools.

New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)

180 West State Street
PO Box 1211
Trenton, New Jersey 08607-1211
609 599 4561
<https://www.njea.org/health-safety-publications/>

National Education Association (NEA)

1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-3290
202 833 4000
<https://www.nea.org/healthy-schools>

PEOSH – NJ Dept. of Health (Health hazards complaints)

PO Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360
609 984 1863
<http://nj.gov/health/peosh>

PEOSH – NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development (Safety hazards and discrimination complaints)

PO Box 386
Trenton, NJ 08625-0386
609 633 3896/800 624 1644
<https://www.nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/compform.shtml>

New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC)

(Labor, community, environment coalition)
E-mail: info@njwec.org
www.njwec.org

For Assistance:

- Contact your association representative immediately. Your local or the NJEA UniServ office can help you with Workers' Compensation. You are entitled under state law (N.J.S.A.18A:30-2.1) "...to full salary without loss of sick days for up to one year..." and all medical treatment.