

Zionsville Community Schools



Unified Student Services Instructional Assistant Paraprofessional ADDENDUM

Important Notice: This Handbook Addendum is subject to change at any time and staff members are instructed to check the ZCS Employee Portal for the most updated version of this handbook. If unable to access electronically, it is the responsibility of the staff member to contact their ZCS Human Resources Department for assistance.

Revised July 2026

Zionsville Community Schools

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Dear Colleague,

Welcome to Unified Student Services at Zionsville Community Schools! It is my privilege to welcome you to our team.

At ZCS, we believe every employee plays an essential role in helping students thrive. Whether you work directly with students or support the systems that serve them, your contributions make a meaningful difference every day.

Our work is guided by the ZCS Strategic Plan, which calls on us to Engage, Create, and Belong. Together, we strive to foster meaningful relationships, create innovative learning experiences, and ensure every student, family, and staff member feels valued and connected. These priorities build upon our commitment to Strong in Every Way, preparing students not only for academic success, but to become confident, compassionate, and resilient members of their communities.

Zionsville Community Schools is committed to being a great place to work because we know our people are our greatest strength. When our staff members feel supported, valued, and empowered, our students benefit.

This Unified Student Services Addendum is intended to supplement the Core Classified Handbook by outlining department-specific expectations, procedures, and resources. It is designed to help you understand both what you can expect from Unified Student Services and what we ask of you as a member of our team. If you have questions at any time, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to support you.

Thank you for choosing to serve the students, families, and staff of Zionsville Community Schools. We are grateful you are here and look forward to the impact you will make.

Welcome to ZCS!

Sincerely,

Casey Allen
Director of Unified Student Services
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PURPOSE

The Unified Student Services Department is committed to ensuring that every student has equitable access to the supports, services, and educational opportunities needed to thrive. In partnership with families, educators, and the community, we provide specialized instruction, related services, and individualized supports that empower students to reach their full potential.

Our work is guided by the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Indiana Article 7, and other applicable federal and state laws. Unified Student Services provides special education and related services for eligible students ages 3 through 22.

Zionsville Community Schools offers a full continuum of special education services and placement options. Through the Case Conference Committee (CCC) process, educational teams work collaboratively with families to determine the services and supports that best meet each student's unique strengths and needs. Whenever appropriate, students are educated alongside their peers in the least restrictive environment while receiving the individualized supports necessary for success.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees of Unified Student Services are entrusted with access to confidential student, staff, and district information. Protecting the privacy and dignity of those we serve is a fundamental professional responsibility and an essential part of maintaining the trust of our students, families, colleagues, and community.

Employees are expected to:

- Maintain the confidentiality of all students, staff, and district information in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and all applicable federal, state, and district policies.
- Access confidential information only when it is necessary to perform assigned job responsibilities.
- Discuss confidential information only with individuals who have a legitimate educational interest.
- Safeguard both paper and electronic records from unauthorized access or disclosure.
- Conduct themselves professionally in all settings, recognizing that confidentiality extends to conversations, emails, phone calls, meetings, social media, and other forms of communication.

Failure to maintain confidentiality or the inappropriate use or disclosure of confidential information may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, consistent with district policy and applicable employment agreements.

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES AND ROLE OF SUPPORT STAFF

Zionsville Community Schools provides a continuum of special education services designed to meet the unique strengths and needs of eligible students. Services are determined through the Case Conference Committee (CCC) process and are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate for each individual student.

For preschool students (ages 3 through kindergarten eligibility), the CCC considers each student's developmental, educational, communication, behavioral, and related service needs when determining appropriate services and placement.

For students in kindergarten through age 22, services may include, but are not limited to:

- Specialized instruction and supports provided within the general education classroom
- General education programming supported by specialized instruction delivered both inside and outside of the classroom
- Specialized classrooms that provide instruction in functional academics, communication, life skills, behavior, and/or other individualized areas of need, while maximizing opportunities for participation with nondisabled peers when appropriate

Support staff, including instructional assistants and paraprofessionals, are essential members of the educational team and play a vital role in supporting student success across the continuum of services. Working under the direction of licensed staff, support staff assist in implementing instructional programs, behavioral supports, accommodations, communication systems, self-care supports, and other individualized services outlined by the educational team.

Because support staff work closely with students each day, they often develop valuable insight into student progress, strengths, and needs. These observations are an important part of the instructional team and should be communicated regularly with supervising teachers and related service providers. Support staff do not independently design or modify instructional programming but are encouraged to actively participate in team collaboration in support of student growth.

In some cases, a student may require dedicated support staff to safely access instruction or participate in the educational environment. These decisions are made individually through the Case Conference Committee process based on documented student needs and may occur in any setting across the continuum of services.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Unified Student Services support staff are essential members of the educational team who support students in accessing instruction, developing independence, and participating fully in their school environment.

Primary Role

Support staff work under the direction of licensed personnel, which may include special education teachers, general education teachers, and related service providers. Responsibilities may include:

- Supporting students in general and specialized classroom settings
- Implementing academic, behavioral, communication, and social-emotional accommodations and supports
- Providing pre-teaching, reteaching, and reinforcement of skills
- Supporting student independence across instructional, social, and daily living routines
- Assisting with data collection as directed by supervising staff
- Supporting students in community-based instruction, vocational training, or school-based employment experiences
- Assisting students with personal care needs, including feeding, hygiene, and toileting, when required
- Implementing behavior supports aligned with student plans and staff direction
- Completing other duties as assigned by supervising staff or building/district administration

Professional Expectations in School Settings

All Unified Student Services support staff are expected to:

- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, families, and staff
- Maintain confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, IDEA, and district policy
- Follow the direction of supervising licensed staff as the instructional leader of the learning environment
- Communicate concerns, questions, or observations directly with the supervising teacher or appropriate team member
- Share relevant student information in a professional, timely manner with appropriate staff
- Refrain from discussing student progress, concerns, or school matters with families unless directed by supervising staff
- Demonstrate professionalism, honesty, and collaboration with all team members
- Participate in district and building professional learning opportunities

Supporting Student Growth and Independence

Support staff play a critical role in fostering student independence. Staff are expected to:

- Support students in completing tasks as independently as possible
- Use encouragement, positive reinforcement, and age-appropriate communication
- Implement strategies and behavior supports as trained and directed
- Follow student-specific plans including IEPs, BIPs, and accommodations
- Provide appropriate prompting and fade support over time to increase independence
- Maintain a calm, respectful, and supportive demeanor at all times
- Encourage problem-solving, communication, and self-advocacy skills
- Ask questions and seek clarification when new procedures or supports are introduced

Professional Mindset

Effective support staff demonstrate:

- Flexibility as student needs, schedules, and assignments change
- A willingness to learn and grow professionally
- Strong communication and collaboration with educators and related service providers
- Commitment to student safety, dignity, and emotional well-being
- Confidentiality in all settings, including informal conversations
- A belief that all students can learn, grow, and contribute to their community

EXPECTATIONS

WORKING HOURS

Work schedules are established by your building principal, assistant principal, or direct supervisor based on student and building needs. Employees are expected to work their assigned schedule and arrive on time, prepared to begin work at the start of their scheduled shift.

Hourly employees are responsible for accurately recording their time each workday using the district's designated system. Pay is calculated in accordance with district payroll procedures.

Employees should work only their assigned and approved hours. Any additional hours or overtime must receive prior approval from the appropriate building administrator or supervisor. Employees who are not eligible for benefits are generally scheduled to work no more than 29 hours per week unless otherwise authorized by the district.

ATTENDANCE

Consistent attendance and punctuality are essential to providing high-quality services and maintaining a positive learning environment for students. Students benefit from predictable routines and consistent relationships with the staff members who support them.

If you need to be absent or arrive late, notify your building administrator and supervising teacher (Teacher of Record, if applicable) as soon as you become aware of the need for the absence. Employees are expected to follow all district attendance and leave procedures, including those outlined by Human Resources.

Employees requesting leave that extends beyond their available paid time off (PTO) must obtain approval from Human Resources and their building administrator when the absence is foreseeable. If an unforeseen circumstance results in an unpaid absence, the employee must promptly communicate with Human Resources and their building administrator. Unapproved absences, excessive absenteeism, or failure to follow district leave procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Failure to report to work without notifying your supervisor (a "no call, no show") may be considered job abandonment and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

DRESS AND PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE

Employees are expected to maintain a professional appearance that reflects positively on Zionsville Community Schools and supports a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment.

Clothing should be clean, neat, appropriate for the work setting, and suitable for the physical demands of the position. Employees should wear attire and footwear that allow them to safely perform their assigned responsibilities, including assisting students with mobility, participating in classroom activities, or responding to student needs.

Building administrators may provide additional guidance regarding appropriate attire based on the specific duties or activities within their building.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND GROWTH

Zionsville Community Schools is committed to providing ongoing learning opportunities that equip employees with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support students. Professional learning helps ensure safe, high-quality services while fostering continued growth in your role.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVCi) Training

Many Unified Student Services staff participate in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVCi) training. This training focuses on proactively recognizing, preventing, and de-escalating challenging behaviors while promoting the philosophy of Care, Welfare, Safety, and SecuritySM for everyone involved.

Employees learn strategies to assess the level of risk presented by a behavior and to respond using interventions that are reasonable, appropriate, and proportionate to the situation. Additional refresher training may be required based on an employee's assignment and district expectations.

Beginning-of-Year and Ongoing Professional Learning

Prior to the start of each school year, instructional assistants/paraprofessionals are invited to participate in a districtwide professional learning session led by the Unified Student Services leadership team. These sessions provide important updates, reinforce best practices, and prepare staff for the upcoming school year.

Throughout the year, additional professional learning opportunities are offered to support instructional practices, student needs, safety procedures, and district initiatives. Employees are encouraged to actively participate in these opportunities and to communicate with their supervisor or the Unified Student Services leadership team if additional training or support would be beneficial.

BENEFITS

PAY POLICY

Hourly employees are responsible for accurately recording all hours worked using the district's designated timekeeping system. If you have questions regarding timekeeping procedures, please contact your building administrative assistant. Questions regarding payroll should be directed to the Payroll Specialist.

Please plan accordingly for breaks in pay that occur during scheduled school holidays (e.g., Fall Break, Thanksgiving Break, Winter Break, and Spring Break).

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Zionsville Community Schools is committed to supporting the well-being of its employees by offering a comprehensive benefits package to eligible classified staff. Benefit eligibility is determined by employee group and/or regularly scheduled work hours.

Eligible employees may have access to some or all of the following benefits:

Health Insurance

- Medical, Dental, and Vision Coverage
 - Silver Plan (PPO)
 - Eagle Plan (CDHP/HDHP) with employer Health Savings Account (HSA) contributions
 - Provider Network: Ascension St. Vincent Employer Network, OrthoIndy, and additional participating providers
- Onsite Employee Wellness Clinic

- Medical care
- Mental health counseling
- Nutrition and dietitian services
- Sports performance services
- Available at no cost for employees enrolled in the ZCS Health Plan

District-Provided Benefits and Voluntary Offerings

- Life Insurance
- Long-Term Disability Insurance
- Flexible Spending Accounts (Healthcare, Dependent Care, and Flex)
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Supplemental Insurance Options

Retirement

- 403(b) Voluntary Retirement Contributions and Roth Deferral Option
- Employer 3% Match for eligible 403(b) participants
- 457 Deferred Compensation Plan

Employees with questions regarding benefits are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Coordinator at (317) 873-2858.

PAID TIME OFF (PTO)

181.5 Day Instructional Assistants and Paraprofessionals

*Sick	5
*Personal	2

*Prorated according to start date

Sick Leave

Sick leave becomes available beginning the first day of the month following 30 days of employment with Zionsville Community Schools. Sick leave may be used for an employee's personal illness, the illness of an immediate family member, or the birth of a child (spouse).

For purposes of sick leave, immediate family includes a spouse, child, sister, brother, mother, father, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, and any other member of the employee's household.

Unused sick leave carries over from year to year and may accumulate without limitation. Employees should notify their building administrator and Teacher of Record (if applicable) as soon as possible when sick leave is needed.

Personal Business Leave (PBL)

Personal Business Leave becomes available beginning the first day of the month following 30 days of employment with Zionsville Community Schools.

PBL may be used to conduct personal business and must be requested in advance and approved by the building administrator. Employees should provide as much advance notice as possible when requesting personal leave.

Available leave balances are reflected on each employee's pay advice. Personal Business Leave that exceeds the maximum allowable accumulation will automatically convert to accumulated sick leave.

Sick leave and Personal Business Leave may not be used during the final two weeks following an employee's notice of resignation or separation from employment. Sick leave during this period may be approved with appropriate medical documentation.

SEVERANCE

Applicable only to employees hired prior to July 1, 2024.

Benefit-eligible employees may qualify for severance benefits upon separation from employment if they meet the eligibility requirements established by the School Corporation.

To qualify, an employee must have:

1. Completed ten (10) years of service in a benefit-eligible position with the School Corporation (or its components prior to consolidation); and
2. Either:
 - Reached age fifty-five (55) by July 1 of the year of severance; or
 - Completed twenty (20) years of service with the School Corporation (or its components prior to consolidation), regardless of age.

The severance benefit consists of a single payment equal to:

1. \$25 for each full year of eligible service; plus
2. \$15 for each unused accumulated sick leave and Personal Business Leave day.

Because employee work schedules vary, years of service and unused leave days will be prorated as applicable.

An employee who has completed twenty (20) years of service and becomes totally disabled (as certified by a physician approved by the School Corporation) prior to age fifty-five (55) remains eligible for severance benefits.

If an eligible employee passes away before receiving severance benefits, the remaining benefit will be paid to the employee's designated beneficiary or estate.

APPENDIX A: SPECIAL EDUCATION QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Special Education Eligibility Categories

Students may qualify for special education services under one or more eligibility categories defined by Indiana Article 7. These categories include:

- Autism (ASD)
- Deaf-Blind (DB)
- Developmental Delay (DD)
- Emotional Disability (ED)
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Intellectual Disability (ID)
- Multiple Disabilities (MD)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Speech or Language Impairment (SI/LI)
- Blind or Low Vision (BLV)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Common Acronyms in Special Education

ACR – Annual Case Review

AT – Assistive Technology

BIP – Behavior Intervention Plan

CCC – Case Conference Committee

ESY – Extended School Year

FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education

FBA – Functional Behavioral Assessment

IA – Instructional Assistant

IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP – Individualized Education Program

ISP – Individualized Service Plan

LRE – Least Restrictive Environment

ML – Multi-lingual Learners

MTSS – Multi-Tiered System of Supports

OT – Occupational Therapist

PT – Physical Therapist

SLP – Speech-Language Pathologist

TOR – Teacher of Record

TOS – Teacher of Service

USS – Unified Student Services

Key Laws and Concepts

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) is the federal law that ensures students with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

Indiana Article 7 outlines how IDEA is implemented in Indiana schools.

IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a legal document that outlines a student's special education services and must be followed as written.

LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) means students are educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate based on individual needs.

FBA (Functional Behavioral Assessment) is a process used to understand the purpose of behavior and guide the development of behavior supports.

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) protects the privacy of student records. All student information must remain confidential. Discussion of student-specific information is prohibited outside of professional educational settings.

For additional questions or clarification, please contact Casey Allen, Director of Unified Student Services.