



**Advocate Academy 101:
504 Plan Preparation-GA**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 & Section 504

Section 504 Background

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act was the first civil rights law for people with disabilities in the United States. Section 504 is part of that law.

Section 504 **prohibits** disability discrimination from any program that receives federal funds, which includes public schools. **Public K-12 schools are required to offer 504 Plans.**

What are the requirements for a 504 Plan?

There are two requirements for a 504 Plan.

1. Your child has a disability, any disability. Section 504 covers a wide range of diagnoses in an educational setting.
2. The diagnosis must interfere with your child's ability to learn in the general education setting.

The definition of disability is broader under Section 504. Under Section 504 the diagnosis must **“substantially limit one or more basic life activities”**. This can include learning, reading, communicating, and thinking.

What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan is an **educational blueprint** for your child. The plan will outline how the school will provide educational support and access while removing barriers in the general education setting.

Differences Between IEPs & 504s

What are the **differences** between an IEP and 504 Plan?

- IEP is a plan for special education supports in your child's school which provides **specially designed instruction** and supports
- The student must have 1 or more of the 13 disabilities listed in IDEA that impacts their educational performance
- In addition to accommodations and supports, IEPs include annual goals supported through the SDI.
- IEPs must be updated annually.
- A 504 Plan is a plan for **removing educational barriers** in the general education setting
- The student can have any disability which impacts the ability to learn in the general education class
- 504 Plans have specific accommodations and supports that help the child learn
- Rules vary state by state when updating a 504 Plan

Before the 504 Meeting

A student **must** show that they have a disability or diagnosis that impacts **one or more major life activities**, but the school isn't required to provide the same evaluations that would be performed for IEP eligibility.

The 504 team should consider:

- A review of all of student's work
- A review of medical records or previous evaluation reports
- Direct observation
- Interviews with the student, the parents, and school personnel
- Other assessments determined by the school

504 Plans use terms and phrases you may not know, and most of these terms and phrases come from the law.

- **Accommodation:** A change to how or where a child is taught, or how the materials are used for teaching.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Federal civil rights law which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. This includes schools K-12, and higher education.
- **Least Restrictive Environment:** As with an IEP, the LRE is applicable. Students with disabilities must learn in the same setting as other students.
- **Supplementary Aides & Services:** Supports that help children learn in the general education classroom, such as assistive technology.

Terms To Know Continued

- **General Education Curriculum:** The knowledge and skills all public school students are expected to master.
- **Modification:** A change in what the student is expected to learn or how they are expected to learn in the general education setting.
- **Disability:** For a student to receive a 504 plan, they must have a diagnosis or disability. Their disability must impact their ability to participate in a major life activity. Kids who struggle with learning, reading, thinking, writing, or concentrating usually qualify.

Parental rights for a 504 plan are **different** from an IEP. In IDEA parental rights are clearly outlined, which is not the same for 504 Plans.

1. Request and review your child's educational records and school work before the meeting. FERPA Law requires the district provide you access to review with 45 days of request. Plan ahead.
2. Ensure that you are invited and included in your child's 504 meeting.
3. Review all proposed accommodations.
4. Ask for clarification about the proposed accommodations.
5. Request a copy of your child's 504 plan for your records.
6. Follow up about the implementation of your child's 504 Plan.

Accommodations & Modifications

There is a difference between accommodations and modifications. Both are part of a 504 plan depending on the child's diagnosis.

What's the difference?

Accommodation: how the student learns in the classroom.

Modification: what the student is taught or expected to learn.

Documentation is important.

How you organize and keep the information is up to you. You can track your child's progress based on the accommodations and modifications implemented in the general education classroom.

Check with the school/district about **audio recording** the meetings. Plan to make your own audio recording of EVERY meeting. **Otter.ai** is a helpful app/extension for recording and transcribing.

It's important to know what to do and what **NOT** to do in a 504 meeting.

- Closing yourself off to the possibilities of a 504 plan
- Passive participation
- Accepting a template or “standard” 504 plan
- Thinking that the 504 plan is being implemented and not monitoring your child's progress
- Not pushing for an annual update
- Thinking you must sign the 504 plan at the end of the meeting

Remember Why You're Advocating

You *will* want to research accommodations and modifications.

You *might* think that a 504 plan isn't enough for your child.

Remember **who** you are advocating for and **why** you are advocating.

Take a breath, and be your child's **champion**.

Linked articles from the 504 Plan presentation:

- [6 Myths about 504 Plans](#)
- [504 Plan Guide](#)
- [Common Accommodations](#)
- [Surprising Accommodations](#)
- [Difference Between IEP and 504 Evaluations](#)
- [Civil Rights of Students with Hidden Disabilities](#)

More liked articles:

- [Organizing Your IEP/504 Binder](#)
- [7 Tips for Productive Meeting](#)
- [Differences Between IEPs and 504s](#)
- [IEPs and 504s in College?](#)
- [5 Common Pitfalls](#)
- [FERPA Guide for Parents](#)

Resources:

- National Center for Learning Disabilities:
www.nclld.org
- Edutopia.org
www.edutopia.org
- Learning Disabilities Association of America:
www.ldaamerica.org
- Understood
www.understood.org

- Council for Exceptional Children
www.cec.sped.org
- Parent Center Hub:
www.parentcenterhub.org
- Wrightslaw Special Education Law & Advocacy
www.wrightslaw.com
- Council of Parent Attorneys & Advocates
www.copaa.org

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Thank you!