

WHAT IS 504

1973 Federal Civil Rights Law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal funds*, including public schools. Ensures that a child with a disability has equal access to educational opportunities provided to their non-disabled peers.

**Note that federal funding is not provided to support 504 modifications.*

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Provides services and changes to the learning environment to remove barriers and enable students to learn alongside their peers. The school must meet a child's educational needs and right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 504 and IEP

	504	IEP
Type of Law	Civil Rights	Education
Eligibility Requirements	Disability significantly impairs a major life function (may not have an educational impact)	Disability must meet criteria under IDEA, significantly impact educational performance, and require specialized services
Plan Includes	Mostly accommodations, sometimes modifications and related services	Accommodations, modifications, courses, related services
Age Limits	No age limit	3 to 21 years
Length of Services	Paperwork can be used as a guide for college	Ends with high school graduation
School Committee	Optional based on school policy	Mandatory
Dispute Rights	Less recourse	Parents/guardians have due process and procedural safeguards
Parent Involvement	Recommended	Required
Federal Funding Provided?	None	Yes



A close-up photograph of a young Black woman with short curly hair, wearing a yellow and white chevron patterned top and a gold necklace. She is smiling and looking slightly to her right. In the foreground, a young Black boy with short hair, wearing a grey and white striped shirt, is looking up at her. The background is blurred.

**EQUAL
ACCESS.**



WHO QUALIFIES

Any child that has disabilities that interfere with the child's ability to learn in a general education classroom (504 has a broader definition of disability than IDEA, so a child who doesn't qualify for an IEP might still get a 504 plan).

Disabilities can include any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (similar to ADA guidelines for individuals in the workplace).

A child does not have to be failing to qualify for support. Their disability just has to have an impact on their education.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

504 plans do not have to be written and there is not a standard template.

Generally includes —

- Specific accommodations, supports, or services for the child
- Name of who will provide each service
- Name of the person responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented

The plan can also —

- Modify or change what a child is expected to learn
- Include specialized instruction
- Include specialized services like speech or occupational therapy

Parents/Guardians must be notified about significant educational changes like identification, evaluation, and classroom placement.

The school's decision can be challenged via the school and/or district personnel, Office of Civil Rights, or, as a last resort, a lawsuit.

School districts are required to establish grievance procedures for resolving complaints in a prompt and equitable manner.

POSSIBLE ACCOMMODATIONS

- Extra time on tests
- Seating options
- Additional strategies
- Tutor
- Assistive technology
- Oral test administration
- Sign language interpreter
- Behavior contracts
- Organizational/time management strategies
- Extra duty contracts
(to have appropriate staff at extracurricular/athletic events)

CONSIDERATIONS

There are often challenges at the family level as a result of a service member diagnosed with PTSD, including children experiencing behavioral problems.

A specific diagnosis like anxiety or depression is unnecessary. The 504 planning team can determine there is a need for accommodations and create a plan to help the student if the problems are affecting the student's ability to learn.

Transition Considerations —

The Military Interstate Children's Compact provides that for up to one year after a parent is medically discharged, retires, or dies on active duty, the receiving district must honor an existing Section 504 plan.

The Compact requires receiving schools to comply with an existing Section 504 plan and to make reasonable accommodations and modifications for incoming students with disabilities.

The receiving school may perform subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement and services.

Parents are encouraged to provide all previous Section 504 and supporting documentation to the receiving school.

NEXT STEPS

Document the child's needs. This could include health records showing a medical diagnosis, schoolwork, report cards, private evaluations, etc.

Every public school district must have a 504 coordinator (may also be the IEP coordinator). Check the school/district website and/or ask the campus principal.

Collaborate with the school/district team to complete the process. If not sure whether the child needs an IEP or a 504 plan, request an evaluation for an IEP.

Plans should be re-evaluated every 3 years at a minimum. *Best practice is to review annually (ensure plan is implemented and working) and re-evaluate as needed (change accommodations).*

TERMINATION OF A 504 PLAN

The 504 plan can be terminated if the team determines the student is:

- No longer disabled.
- No longer requires any special accommodations or services to meet the identified needs.
- Can be appropriately instructed in general education.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504 in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

(Published by US Dept of Education Office for Civil Rights, Dec 2016)

[Visit ed.gov to download this PDF](#)

Understood Resources

[IEP vs 504](#)

[Your Rights in the 504 Process](#)

[Steps to Getting a 504 Plan for Your Child](#)

[Visit understood.org to access these resources](#)

Section 504 Resources at the Center for Parent Information & Resources

[Visit Section 504 page at parentcenterhub.org](#)

Military Interstate Compact and Section 504

[Visit mic3.net to download the compact \(page 11\)](#)

Section 504 Resources on Wrightslaw

[Visit wrightslaw.com to access these resources](#)

Understanding Section 504 PowerPoint Slides

[Visit militarychild.org to access this presentation](#)

Five Actions for Exceptional Parents *For the Sake of the Child* Podcast

[Visit PodBean or App Store to download](#)