

Navigating the Section 504 Process

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: What is a 504 plan?

A: The plan is a legal document that provides a process for students with medical issues to receive modifications and accommodations to help with learning and succeed in the school setting.

Q: What is Section 504?

A: Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights law that requires all educational institutions who receive federal funding to provide accommodations for students with a physical or mental impairment, or a record of impairment that limits at least one major life activity.

Q: What is a physical or mental impairment?

A: A physical or mental impairment is defined as "any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following basic symptoms: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genitourinary; hematologic and lymphatic; skin and endocrine; or any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and special learning disabilities." Sickle cell disease, seizures and cancer are some examples of qualifying physical impairments.

Q: What is a major life activity?

A: Section 504 defines a major life activity as, "functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working."

Q: How does a student get a 504 plan?

A: This is a multi-step process:

- The student must be referred by a parent or guardian, teacher, physician or therapist to the student's counselor, principal or 504 coordinator.
- The student is then assessed to determine if he or she has limit in a major life function.
- Once eligibility is determined, a 504 meeting is held.
- The school is responsible for scheduling the 504 meeting with the family.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, a review date will be set.

Q: What are some example accommodations?

A: Accommodations might include two sets of books (one for home and one for school), the ability to carry a water bottle, modification of physical activities, or modification of assignments or tests.

Q: Who is involved in writing the 504 plan?

A: The student's parent or guardian, classroom teacher, special education teacher, guidance counselor, other key school staff/administrators, and the student (if appropriate).

Q: May I bring people to the 504 meeting?

A: Yes. You may bring other family members, a social worker, advocate, etc. who you think will be helpful in articulating your student's needs.

Q: How long does a 504 last?

A: The review date will be set during the meeting.

Q: What happens if I do not agree with part of the plan?

A: Your first option is to not sign the initial plan. In the event changes need to be made to the plan after it has been signed, you must send a written request to all of the meeting attendees to address the concern and outline proposed changes.

For more information about Section 504, please visit The US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.