



SECTION 504 PLANS



How do I request a 504 plan at my child's school?

Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. A Section 504 is a collaborative plan or “blueprint” that outlines special education services that are tailored to the qualifying child’s specific educational needs. Section 504 plans are usually used to accommodate a child who has special educational needs or receives informal support services due to a condition or disability that would otherwise limit them in a regular education classroom.

1. Referral or request is submitted by someone who works closely with the child – usually a parent or school professional.

- a. This request may be written or verbal.
- b. Parents must be given notice before their child is evaluated or placed under Section 504.

2. Child is evaluated.

- a. Formal testing is not necessary – 504 team members will review the child’s grades, teachers’ reports, medical records, and any additional information or reports provided by family members or school/medical staff.
- b. Parents/guardians have the option to pay for an outside evaluation if they prefer (schools are not required to cover this cost).

3. Eligibility is decided.

- a. A group meeting is held with educational professionals and parents/guardians (parents/guardians have the right to invite outside specialists such as private therapists).
- b. The group discusses the child’s academic, behavioral, and social strengths and weaknesses, individual team members’ concerns, and possible accommodations or support devices.
- c. Mediation services may be utilized if a consensus cannot be determined.

* A parent/guardian request for evaluation **MUST** be followed. Providing the school with a formal, dated letter of request tends to ensure the request is taken seriously. Schools may not delay this request for any reason (including “it’s too late in the school year,” or “the child will not qualify,” etc.).

The requirements for the Section 504 evaluation and qualification process are far less detailed than that of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The Section 504 plan will not include annual goals. However, schools must reevaluate at least every three years and notify the family of any “significant changes.” Specific rules and regulations vary by state.