

Frequently Asked Questions about 504's

Q: What is 504?

A: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of (1973), 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq., prohibits discrimination against eligible individuals with disabilities in programs or activities that receive federal funding. Under Section 504 a person with a disability is defined as anyone who:

- Has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities OR
- Has a record of such impairment OR
- Is regarded as having such impairment

Q: What is a Section 504 Accommodation Plan?

A: A Section 504 plan is an individualized plan created by the 504 committee identifying the disability and how it “substantially limits” the student. The plan also identifies accommodations and modifications to be put in place to help the student access educational opportunities and programs on par with his/her peers.

Q: How is a Section 504 plan different from an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)?

A: Both plans are individualized to the student, however they differ in the purposes they serve. A Section 504 plan provides accommodations to enables the student to access educational opportunities and programs in a way that levels the playing field. An IEP is required for students whose disability adversely affects their educational performance such that they require specialized instruction in order to access the curriculum and have goals to measure their progress.

Q: Who can refer a student to the 504 Committee?

A: Any member of the school community, a parent/guardian, teacher, administrator or other agency/community member can make a referral if he/she suspects that a student may have a disability as defined by Section 504. A student may make a self-referral. The important thing to remember is that the child must meet the criteria described above- that is, the child must have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Q: What are considered major life activities?

A: “Major life activities” include functions such as:

Performing manual tasks

Walking

Seeing

Caring for oneself

Speaking

Working

Lifting

Bending

Reading

Hearing
Breathing
Learning

Eating
Sleeping
Standing

Concentrating
Thinking
Communicating

“Major life activities” also include major bodily functions, such as:

Functions of the immune system
Bowel
Respiratory
Reproductive functions

Normal cell growth
Bladder
Circulatory

Digestive
Neurological
Endocrine

Q: How often is a 504 Plan Updated?

A: The 504 Committee must document that the child meets all three essential elements of eligibility initially and upon periodic review/reevaluations. The committee must meet periodically to determine whether the Section 504 plan continues to be appropriate. Whenever the student no longer meets the criteria for Section 504 eligibility, discontinuing the plan is appropriate. Review/reevaluation also occurs prior to any significant change in placement, transfer to a new school, or changes in a student’s educational performance behavior or attendance that are cause for concern.

Q: Who is part of the 504 Committee?

A: The following individuals are members of the committee:

- Section 504 Chairperson
- Parent
- A person or persons knowledgeable about the child
- A person or persons knowledgeable about evaluation data