

## **What is a 504 Plan?**

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### **What is a Section 504 Plan?**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. It ensures that a youth with a disability has equal access to an education. A 504 plan is a blueprint for how the school will support a student with a disability and remove barriers to learning through accommodations.

### **How does a Student Qualify for a 504 Plan?**

To get a 504 plan, a student must: 1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or 2) have a record of such an impairment; or 3) be regarded as having such impairment. Examples of a major life activity can include reading, communicating, learning, or concentrating. Generally, a school will complete further evaluations to determine if a student meets at least one of the qualifications.

A student or their guardian can also request a 504 plan with the school. This request should be made in writing (i.e. through a letter or email) to the 504 coordinator, if the school has one. If you are unsure who to ask, ask the principal or another staff member who to contact about this request. A meeting will be held to determine if the student qualifies for a 504 plan and what supports are appropriate. It can be helpful to provide the school with medical documentation or doctor recommendations to support this request.

### **What is Included in a 504 Plan?**

While there are no set rules for what a 504 plan should look like, they often include accommodations to access the general education setting. This can include changes to the school environment such as testing in a quiet space or taking more frequent breaks. Accommodations are different than modifications. A Section 504 plan cannot modify the school's curriculum, which changes what the student is taught or expected to learn.

Accommodations are meant to remove barriers to learning and address specific challenges the student is facing in their education.

For example, a student with ADHD who is easily distracted might get a seat at the front of the class. A student with a complex medical condition may get more breaks for a snack or to use the restroom.

Make sure the school is providing the 504 plan to all school staff interacting with the student who needs to know how to accommodate the student.

### **Can the 504 Plan Change?**

If a support or accommodation is no longer working for the student, call a 504 team meeting to change the plan to find ways to appropriately accommodate them. If the student has a new life circumstance that affects their disability or a new diagnosis to add, it is important to update the 504 team as the plan may need to change. It is helpful to provide medical documentation if a new diagnosis occurs.

### **What is a Behavioral Intervention Plan?**

A behavioral intervention plan (BIP) is a plan to help minimize and manage behaviors of a student with a disability. A BIP is made after a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is completed. Not every student on a 504 plan needs a BIP as one is only necessary for students with behavioral needs. If the BIP is not working for the student a new FBA can be conducted or minor changes can be made in order to minimize the behaviors at school. For more information about FBA's and BIP's, see Disability Rights Idaho's Special Education FAQs.

### **What if a guardian disagrees with the school about the 504 Plan?**

There are a few options when the guardian disagrees with the school about the 504 plan. It is important to first try to work with the school to make a plan that fits the students' needs before alternative dispute resolution options are pursued. For more information on Section 504 dispute resolution options, see Disability Rights Idaho's Special Education FAQs.

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