504 Plan Guide

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Securing Accommodations for Success

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⬚ Understanding 504 Plans

What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan is your blueprint for ensuring your child has equal access to education. Named after Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, it provides accommodations and modifications that remove barriers for students with disabilities.

504 vs. IEP Comparison

Feature	504 Plan	IEP
Purpose	Provides access through accommodations	Provides specialized instruction
Eligibility	Broader - any disability affecting major life activity	Specific - 13 disability categories
Documentation	Simple accommodation plan	Comprehensive educational program
Services	Accommodations only	Special education + related services
Review	As needed (typically annually)	Annual review required

> ⬚ **Tip**: A child can qualify for a 504 Plan even if they don't qualify for an IEP. The eligibility criteria are intentionally broader.

⬚ Eligibility Criteria

The Three-Pronged Test

Your child must meet ALL three criteria:

1. **Has a Disability**

   - Physical or mental impairment
   - Documented by medical professional or evaluation

2. **Substantially Limits**

   - Significant restriction compared to average student
   - Consider without mitigating measures (except glasses)

3. **Major Life Activity**

   - Affects one or more major life activities
   - Including learning, concentrating, thinking

⬚ Common Qualifying Conditions

Medical/Physical:

- ADHD
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Food allergies
- Asthma

- Temporary disabilities (broken bones, concussion)

Mental Health:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- PTSD
- Bipolar disorder

Learning/Developmental:

- Dyslexia (not qualifying for IEP)
- Processing disorders
- Executive function deficits

> ⬜ **Success Indicator**: Documentation from healthcare providers strengthens eligibility determination.

⬜ Accommodation Examples

⬜ Environmental Accommodations

Classroom Setup:

- ☐ Preferential seating (specify: near teacher/away from distractions)
- ☐ Standing desk or alternative seating
- ☐ Reduced visual/auditory stimuli
- ☐ Access to quiet space for breaks
- ☐ Consistent daily routines
- ☐ Visual schedules posted

⬜ Instructional Accommodations

Learning Support:

- ☐ Extended time for assignments (specify: 50% or 100% more)
- ☐ Shortened assignments (same concepts, fewer problems)
- ☐ Break tasks into smaller steps
- ☐ Written AND verbal instructions
- ☐ Graphic organizers provided
- ☐ Study guides before tests
- ☐ Peer note-taker or teacher notes

⬜ Assessment Accommodations

Testing Support:

- ☐ Extended time (typically 50-100% more)
- ☐ Frequent breaks during testing
- ☐ Testing over multiple sessions
- ☐ Oral testing option
- ☐ Calculator use (even on non-calculator sections)
- ☐ Read-aloud for non-reading tests
- ☐ Reduced answer choices

> ⚠ **Important**: Be specific! Instead of "extra time," specify "50% extended time" or "time and a half."

⬜ Behavioral Accommodations

Behavior Support:

- ☐ Behavior intervention plan
- ☐ Break cards (predetermined number)
- ☐ Movement breaks every 30 minutes
- ☐ Modified discipline procedures
- ☐ Cooling-off period option
- ☐ Check-in/check-out system

⬜ Technology Accommodations

Assistive Technology:

- ☐ Text-to-speech software
- ☐ Speech-to-text software

- ☐ Audio recordings of lessons
- ☐ Computer for written work
- ☐ Calculator/multiplication chart
- ☐ Electronic organizers/reminders

⬚ Health-Related Accommodations

Medical Needs:

- ☐ Medication administration
- ☐ Blood sugar monitoring
- ☐ Food allergy management plan
- ☐ Unlimited bathroom breaks
- ☐ Water bottle at desk
- ☐ Snacks as needed
- ☐ Elevator access

⬚ The 504 Process

Step-by-Step Timeline

⬚ Step 1: Identification (Day 1-5)

- Parent, teacher, or staff identifies concern
- Written referral submitted
- Parent consent obtained

> ⬚ **Tip**: Always submit your request in writing and keep a copy. Email creates a timestamp.

⬚ Step 2: Evaluation (Days 6-60)

- Review existing data
- Gather additional assessments if needed
- Consider all areas of suspected disability

What to Provide:

- Medical documentation
- Previous evaluations
- Teacher observations
- Work samples
- Report cards

⬚ Step 3: Eligibility Meeting (Days 61-75)

- Team reviews all data
- Applies three-pronged test
- Makes eligibility determination

Your Team Should Include:

- You (the parent)
- 504 Coordinator
- Teacher(s)
- Administrator
- Others with knowledge of child

⬚ Step 4: Plan Development (If Eligible)

- Develop specific accommodations
- Identify responsible parties
- Set implementation timeline
- Schedule review date

⬚ Step 5: Implementation (Ongoing)

- Plan distributed to all staff
- Training provided if needed
- Accommodations begin immediately
- Progress monitored

⬚ Step 6: Annual Review

- Review effectiveness
- Update based on current needs

- Re-evaluate every 3 years

> 🚩 **Red Flag**: If the school says "we don't do 504 plans" or "wait and see," request to speak with the district 504 coordinator immediately.

📊 Implementation Tracking

Daily Monitoring System

Morning Check-In

- ☐ Accommodations ready for the day
- ☐ Student reminded of available supports
- ☐ Communication with teachers if needed

End-of-Day Review

- ☐ Accommodations utilized effectively
- ☐ Any challenges documented
- ☐ Student feedback gathered

📋 Weekly Review Checklist

Every Friday:

- ☐ Review accommodation usage data
- ☐ Touch base with all teachers
- ☐ Check assignment modifications
- ☐ Review behavior logs (if applicable)
- ☐ Send parent communication update

📈 Monthly Evaluation

Data to Track:

Accommodation	Usage Rate	Effectiveness	Notes
Extended time	___%	High/Medium/Low	
Breaks	___times	High/Medium/Low	
Preferential seating	Daily	High/Medium/Low	

> ✅ **Success Indicator**: Consistent implementation across all settings with documented improvement in student performance.

⚖️ Parent Rights & Advocacy

Your Legal Rights

You Have the Right To:

- ⚖️ Notice of identification, evaluation, and placement
- 📂 Examine all relevant records
- 👥 Impartial hearing with representation
- 🔁 Appeal decisions
- 📝 File complaints with Office for Civil Rights

🗣️ Advocating Effectively

Documentation Strategy

1. **Keep Everything**
   - All emails and letters
   - Meeting notes
   - Progress reports
   - Work samples

2. **Log Daily**
    - Implementation issues
    - Student struggles
    - Successes to celebrate

3. **Communicate Professionally**
    - Always in writing
    - Stick to facts
    - Reference specific needs

Sample 504 Request Letter

```
[Date]

Dear [Principal/504 Coordinator],

I am writing to request a 504 evaluation for my child, [Name],
who is in [Grade] at [School].

I believe my child may qualify for a 504 plan due to [condition]
which substantially limits [specific major life activities].

Specific concerns include:
• [Academic concern with example]
• [Behavioral/social concern with example]
• [Physical/health concern with example]

Attached is documentation from [doctor/specialist] supporting
this request.

Please contact me within 5 school days to discuss next steps
and timeline for evaluation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
[Your name]
[Contact information]
```

> **Tip**: Send via email AND certified mail for documentation. Follow up if no response within 5 school days.

Resources

Key Contacts

Resource	Purpose	Contact
Office for Civil Rights	File complaints	1-800-421-3481
Parent Information Center	Support & guidance	parentcenterhub.org
Understood.org	504 resources	understood.org
District 504 Coordinator	Local questions	[Your district]

Support Organizations

- **CHADD** (for ADHD) | chadd.org
- **Learning Disabilities Association** | ldaamerica.org
- **National Disability Rights Network** | ndrn.org

⚡ Quick Reference Guide

504 Plan At-A-Glance

⬜ Eligibility Quick Check:

- ☐ Has documented disability
- ☐ Substantially limits major life activity
- ☐ Needs accommodations for access

⬜ Common Accommodations:

- Extended time (50-100%)
- Preferential seating
- Breaks as needed
- Written instructions
- Technology support

⬜ Important Timelines:

- Evaluation: 60 days
- Annual review: Every year
- Re-evaluation: Every 3 years

⬜ When to Take Action:

- Accommodations not implemented
- Child still struggling with accommodations
- New needs arise
- Moving to new school

Essential Phrases for Meetings

To Request Accommodations:

- *"Based on the medical documentation..."*
- *"To provide equal access..."*
- *"This accommodation would remove the barrier of..."*

To Address Concerns:

- *"The data shows this isn't working because..."*
- *"We need to adjust the plan to address..."*
- *"Let's problem-solve together..."*

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> ⬜ **Remember**: A 504 Plan is about leveling the playing field. Your child has the right to learn alongside their peers with the support they need to succeed.