



# Unified School District of De Pere

Office of Pupil Services

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Director: Jerry L. Nicholson

Dear Area Medical Providers,

We are getting an unusual number of students referred for evaluations at the suggestion or recommendation of their medical providers. Although a school district takes referrals from any source, students do not automatically qualify as having a disability under the laws followed by public schools when given a medical diagnosis. It can be frustrating for parents if you recommend or prescribe something that might not be available to their son/daughter. As schools cannot recommend a specific medication when suggesting a parent seek medical assistance, a medical provider cannot prescribe school based interventions, an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or a 504 Plan. I would like to take a moment of your time to call your attention to the special education and 504 discrimination laws that apply to the school setting.

## **IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Some children who are having problems in school may need extra help through special education. Special education is for children who have an educational disability. Schools need to follow certain procedures to decide if a child is eligible for special education. These procedures are written in state and federal law with specific educational criteria. The special education laws and procedures are complicated and very specific. A child needs to meet established criteria before being determined as having a disability requiring special education services. The evaluation process can take up to 60 days after written parental consent is obtained.

## **Section 504**

Section 504 is a civil rights legislation that has been in effect since 1973. It seeks to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against in the work place or in schools because of a disability. As it impacts schools, the intent is that a student with a disability will not be discriminated against because of the disability and will be provided access to educational and related opportunities/benefits equal to those of non-disabled peers.

We might suggest that when you feel there is something the school can do to assist a student with a perceived or identified disability that we work collaboratively toward a viable solution. Our student services staff are always available to attend a staffing, meeting or appointment with our families to provide better service and understanding in concert with their medical providers. There are many interventions that can be considered to help a student with and/or without special education. Please encourage parents to reach out to their building level administration, school psychologist, or the district level pupil services office. We can guide them through their options and partner with you if a release of information is obtained.

Please feel free to call with any questions or suggestions regarding this matter. The pupil services office telephone number is provided on the letterhead. We look forward to working closely with you in order to provide greater wrap around services and supports to our students and their families.

Respectfully,