



## Section 504 in Gower

Section 504 is a federal, civil rights law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 provides: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States ....shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance....”

Gower 62 must provide a free appropriate education to its students who are eligible under Section 504. Instruction must be individually designed to meet the needs of those students as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities. A free appropriate public education under Section 504 requires that the services be uniquely tailored to meet each student’s needs. Students with disabilities who do not qualify for an individualized education program, as required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and implementing provisions of the School Code, may qualify for services under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if the child (i) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of a physical or mental impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having a physical or mental impairment in accordance with [105 ILCS 5/14-6.01](#).

If a parent or a school staff member believes that a student may require support through Section 504, a referral should be made for an evaluation. If the team determines that a 504 Plan is needed, the team will develop accommodations, modifications, and/or services under Section 504. The parent(s) will be given a copy of the student’s 504 Plan. This plan must be reviewed on an annual basis.

It is important to note that Section 504 is not a special education plan. The parents and the school team should collaborate to help ensure that students are provided the supports they need to be successful in the regular education classroom. If the team feels that the supports are more appropriately addressed with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP), a referral for a case study evaluation may be warranted.