



# Understanding Section 504: A *Parent's Guide*

Understand your child's rights and how  
to advocate for their needs.

**ENGLISH**



**ESPAÑOL**



# Agenda

- Section 504 and core principles
- 504 vs. SPED
- Eligibility for 504 services
- Types of Accommodations
- Parent Rights

**What is Section 504?**



# What is Section 504?

- A federal **civil rights law** that protects students with disabilities.
- Ensures students have **equal access** to education.
- Applies to all schools receiving federal funding.

**ADA** – Broad civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all public life.

**All Students**

**Students with a disability**

**Students under 504**

**§504** – Children with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit a major function. Will receive a 504 plan if needed, but never an IEP.

**Students under IDEA**

**IDEA** – Children who have one of the 13 IDEA disabilities and who need special education services. Will receive an IEP.



# 504 vs. SPED: *Key Differences*

## Section 504

- Focuses on **removing** barriers.
- Provides accommodations to **access** general education.
- Ensures educational **opportunity**.

## Special Education

- Specialized **instruction** based on individual needs
- Requires a formal IEP.
- Ensures learning **progress**.

# Who is eligible for Section 504?

- Any student with a physical or mental impairment
- The disability creates substantial limitation in major life activities.

# A Student with a Disability ...

- ADHD
- Depression
- Dyslexia
- Anxiety disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Autism
- Peanut allergy
- Asymptomatic HIV
- Asthma
- Seasonal allergies
- Migraines
- Diabetes
- Spina Bifida
- Eating disorders

*\*\*These are some examples.  
This is not an exhaustive list. \*\*\**



# Substantial Limitations are...

- Does the disability make it more difficult for the student to do a major life activity than it would for someone who doesn't have a disability?

# Major Life Activities

- Caring for oneself
- Eating
- Walking
- Performing manual tasks
- Seeing
- Hearing
- Speaking
- Breathing
- Sleeping
- Functions of the immune system
- Normal cell growth
- Digestive

# Major Life Activities

- Bowel
- Bladder
- Neurological
- Brain
- Respiratory
- Circulatory
- Endocrine
- Reproductive functions
- Standing
- Lifting
- Bending
- Working

- **Reading**
- **Concentrating**
- **Thinking**
- **Communicating**
- **Learning**
- **Writing**

# How to get a 504 Plan.



# Referral and Consent

- Parents and/or the school may request a 504 plan when there are concerns.
- Parents must sign consent.
- Make the request in writing (best practice)
- Medical documentation is not a requirement *(it's helpful, but not required)*

# Evaluation

- Not a formal evaluation, More a review of data
- Can include medical dx, but not required
- Multiple data sources should be considered



# Eligibility Determination

- The **504 TEAM** should come together to review all relevant information to decide COLLECTIVELY if the student requires a 504 plan.
- Two Questions are considered:
  - Does the student have a disability?
  - Does the disability substantially limit major life activity?
- If both are YES, the student is eligible for a 504 plan.

# 504 Team Members

Can Make Placement Decisions	Is Knowledgeable about the Student	Can <b>Interpret</b> the Meaning of the Evaluation Data
Principal, Vice/Assistant Principal, Counselor, District 504 Coordinator	<b>Student</b> , Parents or Guardians, Teachers, Counselor, Behavior Specialist, Campus 504 Coordinator, or other Related Service Providers	School Nurse, Diagnostician, Licensed Specialist in School Psychologist, Reading Interventionist, Dyslexia Teacher, Language Proficiency Assessment Representative, Related Service Providers, or Texas Workforce Commission Representative

# Parents have a voice!!!

Parents are **partners** with educators, administrators, and school district boards of trustees in their children's education.



# 504 Plan

- Ideally the plan is reviewed ANNUALLY by the 504 TEAM
- The plan includes REASONABLE accommodations to ensure equal ACCESS to educational opportunity.
- 504 Plans are working documents. Accommodations can be added or removed with team approval.
- 504 Plans must be given to your child's teachers for implementation
- Accommodations on the 504 Plan are NON NEGOTIABLE

# Common Accommodations

- **Classroom Accommodations:** Preferential seating, extra time on tests.
- **Instructional Support:** Use of technology (e.g., speech-to-text tools).
- **Physical Supports:** Breaks during class, elevator access.
- **Health Accommodations:** Medication administration, allergy management.

*\*\*Accommodations are determined based on student need\*\**



# Extra Curricular Activities

- Students with disabilities **MUST** have an equal opportunity for participation in **nonacademic and extracurricular services**.
- Students with 504 plans **MAY NOT** be excluded or discriminated from participation in **extracurricular activities or advanced placement courses**.



# Your Rights as a Parent

## **Participation**

- You have the right to participate in meetings. Share your insights and concerns.

## **Consent**

- The school needs your consent for evaluation. You must approve the 504 plan.

## **Grievance**

- You can file a grievance if you disagree. Follow the school's procedure.

# What if I disagree to the School's Decisions?


- Request a meeting to discuss concerns.
- File a grievance with the school district.
- Contact the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) for support.

# Common Myths about 504 Plans


 Myth: A 504 Plan is the same as special education.

 Truth: 504 Plans provide accommodations, not specialized instruction.

 Myth: A child must have failing grades to qualify.

 Truth: A student can qualify based on the impact of their disability.

 Myth: Schools can refuse to evaluate a student.

 Truth: Schools must evaluate students suspected of having a disability.

# Tips for Parents

- Be sure the school has your preferred contact method on file
- In general, it's best to have an annual 504 meeting to make any necessary changes.
- Keep a copy of your child's 504 plan and any meeting documents.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions. We are here to serve you!
- Remember- you can always request a meeting if you have concerns.

# Resources for Parents

## **Office of Civil Rights**

- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/disabilityoverview.html>

## **Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504**

- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/504-resource-guide-201612.pdf>

## **Technical Assistance: Section 504**

- [https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/504\\_guide.pdf](https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/504_guide.pdf)

# Questions





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Survey

