IEP vs. 504 Plan: What's the Difference?

Families often hear both terms and wonder which one their child needs. While IEPs and 504 Plans both support students with disabilities, they serve different purposes and offer different levels of support.

IEP	504 Plan
Special education program	General education support plan
Services + accommodations	Accommodations only
Specialized instruction	No specialized instruction
Annual goals & progress monitoring	No goals or progress monitoring
Governed by IDEA	Governed by Section 504

What Is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is for students who qualify for special education because a disability impacts their ability to make progress in the general education curriculum. IEPs include specialized instruction, related services, accommodations, goals, and progress monitoring.

What Is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan supports students with a disability that substantially limits a major life activity, but who do not need specialized instruction. It provides accommodations to help students access learning in the general education setting.

Important to Know

Students can move between a 504 Plan and an IEP if their needs change. Parents are equal members of the team and can request meetings, evaluations, or additional support at any time.