

Treutlen County School System

504 Procedures Handbook



2026-27

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Treutlen County Schools – Section 504

Handbook

Who this is for: Families and staff. This handbook provides procedures for identifying, evaluating, and serving students with disabilities under Section 504.

Laws we follow: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (**34 CFR Part 104**), ADA Title II (**28 CFR Part 35**), FERPA (**34 CFR Part 99**), and Georgia rules.

1) Understanding Section 504

- No discrimination. Students with disabilities must have equal access to school programs.
- FAPE. We provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) with the aids and services a student needs to learn as adequately as their peers. (34 CFR §104.33)
- Who qualifies? A student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (e.g., learning, reading, concentrating, breathing). Mitigating measures (like medication) are not counted when deciding eligibility. (34 CFR §104.3; 42 U.S.C. §12102(4)(E))

2) Referral and Evaluation Process

- The school's 504 Referral Form is available in the front office upon request.
- The 504 team will review the referral form and existing information to determine a student's eligibility. (34 CFR §104.32)

3) Eligibility Determination

- We use more than one source: grades, classroom data, observations, behavior/attendance, nurse/medical information, assessments, and work samples.
- Tests and tools are fair and in the student's language. (34 CFR §104.35(b))
- Timelines: referral screening in 10 school days; evaluation within 45 school days of consent.

Eligibility Decision

- Team determines if impairment substantially limits a major life activity; functions as defined by **ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA)**
- Consider the student without mitigating measures.
- If yes, then a 504 plan is developed. If not, documentation is provided to the parent.

4) The 504 Plan

- Upon eligibility, the 504 team develops a 504 plan based on the accommodations to ensure the student has an opportunity to receive an education comparable to that of a non-disabled student.
- The 504 plan lists impairments and limitations, special factors, student supports and services along with who provides them, where they happen, and how we'll review progress.
- Everyone who teaches or supports the student gets a copy of accommodations within the plan; the 504 coordinator will have teachers sign a verification of receipt.

5) Attendance & Medical Diagnoses (including Anxiety)

- A diagnosis—even anxiety—does not automatically excuse absences or tardies.
- Students must follow Georgia attendance laws (O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.1; GaBOE Rule

160-5-1-.10).

- If anxiety (or another condition) substantially limits a major life activity, the 504 Team provides individualized support to ensure FAPE (e.g., structured arrival plan, counseling check-ins, temporary partial-day schedule, consideration of medical homebound per policy). (34 CFR §104.33; 28 CFR §35.130(b)(7))
- When needed for FAPE, plans may excuse absences for documented treatment or acute symptom episodes and allow make-up work without penalty. This is not a blanket excusal of all past or future absences. Upon return, medical documentation must be submitted to the front office notating dates of absences.

6) Placement (Least Restrictive Environment)

Students are educated with nondisabled peers to the **maximum extent appropriate**. The 504 Team first considers **supplementary aids, services, and reasonable modifications** in the regular setting.

If evaluation data show the student **cannot** receive FAPE in the regular setting **even with** appropriate supports, the Team may select a **more restrictive** placement on a continuum that may include, for example: **co-taught/general education with supports; adaptive classroom (small, skills-based or supported setting); temporary alternative program; homebound; or virtual**. The **goal is the setting in which the student can access instruction and make meaningful progress (FAPE)**, with peers **to the maximum extent appropriate**.

The Team will set a **review date** to examine data and may adjust to a **more or less restrictive** setting based on the student's needs. (34 CFR §§104.33–104.35, including §104.34)

7) Accommodations

Determining Accommodations

Accommodations are determined by a 504 committee based on individual student need and supporting documentation. The committee considers how the disability affects the student's access to instruction, the learning environment, and school-related activities.

School accommodations are changes to the learning environment or instructional methods that provide equal access to education for students with disabilities, allowing them to learn the same content as their peers without changing the learning expectations or lowering standards.

504 Plans and accommodations are meant to give access, not to guarantee passing grades, and do not guarantee course credit or passing a grade level.

All accommodations must be:

- **Necessary** to mitigate the impact of the disability;
- **Reasonable** within the school environment; and
- **Implemented consistently** by classroom teachers and staff.

The 504 plan is reviewed annually or as needed to ensure effectiveness.

Commonly Used Accommodations

A list of commonly used accommodations may be found in Appendix 2

Note: These are frequently used examples, not a complete list. Accommodations are not automatic; the 504 Team selects only what the student needs, in line with Georgia guidance.

Instructional & Classroom Accommodations

Accommodation	Definition / Examples
Preferential Seating	The student will be seated near the teacher, instruction area, or away from distractions to improve attention or to aid visual or audio needs as determined by the teacher.
Extended Time for tests or assignments	The student will receive up to 1.5 times the allotted time to complete assessments or assignments when processing speed, attention, or physical limitations interfere with performance.
Small-group or reduced-distraction testing	Testing will occur in a less distracting environment with fewer students to support focus and reduce anxiety.
Test read aloud / oral presentation	Text To Speech (TTS) will be utilized to provide auditory access to the questions and answers; separating the student's ability to read the text (decoding skill) from their ability to understand the subject matter being tested (comprehension or content knowledge)
Alternate format for materials	Textbooks and handouts will be provided in accessible formats (large print, audio, digital, or Braille) as needed. The district adheres to state guidelines for usage of this accommodation as it is rarely deemed necessary.
Note-taking assistance	The teacher will provide printed notes, outlines, or allow peer/technology support to aid the student in keeping the pace of the general education setting.
Modified homework load	Assignments will be shortened and/or adjusted without altering essential content to reduce workload fatigue.
Frequent Breaks	The student will be allowed to take short breaks during instruction and/or testing to address needs related to attention, stamina, or health.
Use of assistive technology	Use of assistive technology, such as speech-to-text programs, calculators, or screen readers, will be permitted as needed to support access to the general curriculum.
Cueing and redirection	The teacher will provide discreet verbal and/or visual reminders for the student to remain on task and/or follow directions.
Behavioral or self-management supports	Teachers and students will implement positive reinforcement, behavior contracts, or self-monitoring tools aligned with the student's identified behavioral goals.

8) Testing and Assessments (State, District, and ACCESS for ELs)

- Testing accommodations must be consistent with classroom instruction and comply with the GaDOE *Student Assessment Handbook*.
- Accommodations are to provide access to the school environment; they can not be put into place for the purpose of guaranteeing proficiency on assessments, or to change what the test measures.
- The mode of administration for the Georgia Milestones program is online. Paper/pencil test materials, such as Braille forms, will be available for the small number of students who cannot interact with the computer due to their disability as documented in their 504 Plan.
- Read-aloud/Text-to-Speech (TTS) limits for ELA Reading: ELA Reading passages are not read aloud unless the student meets GaDOE's specific eligibility criteria. Reading or TTS may be used for items, directions, and allowable stimuli when listed in the plan and permitted by GaDOE.

*Georgia Milestones Read-Aloud Guidance: a student must meet all of the following criteria: The student has a specific documented disability that severely limits or prevents his or her ability to decode text **at any level of difficulty**, even after varied and repeated attempts to teach the student to do so (i.e., the student is a non-reader, not simply reading below grade level); and The student has access to printed materials only through a reader or other electronic format during routine instruction; and There are clear and specific goals within the student's IEP addressing the deficits which necessitate the need for this conditional accommodation.*

- ACCESS for ELs (domain preclusion): For EL students with 504 plans, if a disability makes a language domain (Listening, Speaking, Reading, or Writing) not accessible even with accommodations, the district may request language domain preclusion from GaDOE (state approval required). Document the need in the plan.

Classroom ↔ State Testing Alignment

- The 504 Plan will include only testing accommodations that are documented within the student's plan and have been successfully implemented in the classroom. Teachers will ensure these accommodations are taught and practiced prior to any state assessment.

Retest Accommodation (Local Classroom Assessments)

- If a 504 plan includes a retest accommodation, it means:
 1. The student will receive re-teaching on the same standard(s), and
 2. The student will retake the assessment using new questions/items that measure the same content standard(s).

Grading for Retest (District Practice): When retesting is provided as an accommodation, the retest score becomes the test grade (not an average of the two). Any additional grading guardrails (e.g., maximum score, deadlines) are set in school grading procedures and communicated in the plan.

9) Discipline & Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)

A 504 plan provides support, not exemption from behavior expectations. Students with 504 plans must follow the Student Code of Conduct like everyone else. Consequences can still apply, but we must follow Section 504 rules and ensure the plan is being used correctly. (34 CFR §104.4)

When we must hold a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR).

If a student is removed from school more than 10 consecutive school days, or there is a pattern of shorter removals that adds up to a change in placement, the 504 Team meets within 10 school days for an MDR. (34 CFR §104.35)

At the MDR, the team answers two questions:

1. Was the behavior caused by, or directly related to, the student's disability?
 2. Did the behavior happen because the school did not implement the 504 plan?
- **If YES to either question:**
 - We do not move forward with a long-term disciplinary change of placement.
 - We fix any plan-implementation issues and adjust services/behavior supports so the student continues to receive FAPE. (34 CFR §§104.33–104.35)
 - **If NO to both questions:**
 - The school may apply the same consequence as for peers.
 - The student must still receive FAPE during any removal beyond 10 days (access to curriculum and any 504 accommodations/services needed to make progress). (34 CFR §104.33)

Exceptions:

- When a student with a disability commits a serious offense involving a weapon, illegal drugs, or serious bodily injury, the district may remove the student to an Interim Alternative Educational Setting for up to 45 school days. A Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) must still be conducted within 10 school days of the removal decision. If the behavior is found to be a manifestation of the disability, the student remains in the interim setting for up to 45 school days, and the 504 or IEP team will review and revise the plan as appropriate. (34 CFR §§ 300.530(e)–(g); GaDOE Rule 160-4-7-.10)
- Under O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751.5, possession of a firearm at school typically requires a one-year expulsion.

Parent rights.

Parents/guardians get written notice for identification, evaluation, placement, and significant disciplinary changes. They have the right to an impartial hearing and may also contact the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). (34 CFR §104.36)

10) Bullying/Harassment

- If bullying or harassment may be limiting a student's access to FAPE, the school investigates promptly and the 504 Team convenes to add or change services as needed. The burden is not on the student to avoid bullying.

11) Health Plans & Emergency Procedures

Diabetes Medical Management Plans-

State Law O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779-Requires that each student with diabetes have a Diabetes Medical Management Plan (DMMP) developed and signed by a licensed physician or other authorized healthcare provider.

- The plan must be kept on file at the school and updated at least annually.
- Trained staff must be designated to implement it when the nurse is unavailable.

Seizure Safe Schools Act

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-776- Requires that students with epilepsy or a seizure disorder have a Seizure Action Plan provided by the parent/guardian and signed by a licensed healthcare provider.

- The plan must be distributed to appropriate school personnel and maintained in the student's file.
- Staff likely to supervise or care for the student must receive annual seizure recognition and response training.

12) Training & Monitoring (How We Ensure Quality)

- Annual training for all staff; role-specific modules for teachers, counselors/admin, nurses, testing coordinators, coaches, and transportation.
- Quarterly file reviews, 30/90-day implementation checks, and a pre-testing accommodations audit. Corrective actions are tracked.

13) Records & Privacy

- Records are kept securely in Infinite Campus and the cumulative file. Parents have FERPA rights to inspect and request amendments. (34 CFR Part 99)

14) Parent & Student Rights

- Written notice for identification, evaluation, eligibility, plan/placement changes.

What to Do if You Disagree With Your Child's 504 Plan

Step 1: Talk With the School

Ask for a meeting with your child's 504 Team (teachers, counselor, and staff who know your child). Share your concerns and request changes to the plan if needed.

Step 2: Contact the Principal

If you are not satisfied after the team meeting, submit your concerns in writing to the school principal. The principal will review your complaint and provide a written response.

Step 3: Appeal to the Superintendent

If you are still not satisfied, write a letter to the Superintendent within 15 workdays of the principal's decision. Mail or deliver to:

Dr. Susan Stone, Superintendent
Treutlen County Schools
4313 W. Main St.
Soperton, GA 30457

Step 4: Appeal to the Board of Education

If you disagree with the Superintendent's response, request that your complaint be referred to the Board of Education. The Board will review your complaint at a regular or special meeting and provide a final written decision.

Step 5: Contact State or Federal Agencies

At any time, you have the right to file a complaint with:

Georgia Department of Education –
Office of Legal Services
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE
2052 Twin Tower East
Atlanta, GA 30334 U.S.

OR

Department of Education – Office for Civil Rights
61 Forsyth Street S.W., Suite 19T10
Atlanta, GA 30303-8927
Phone: (404) 974-9406

Impartial Hearing: Families may request a Section 504 due process hearing by writing to the District 504 Coordinator. The Superintendent appoints a trained impartial hearing officer within 10 school days; the hearing is held within 30 calendar days; a written decision issues within 10 days of record close.

Contacts

TMHS 504 Lead -

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TES 504 Lead-

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District 504 Coordinator

Brand Hendrix- Special Education Director
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Backup Contact

Donald Reeves, Assistant Superintendent
(912) 529-7104 | dreeves@treutlen.k12.ga.us

Office for Civil Rights (Atlanta Office)

U.S. Department of Education, 61 Forsyth St. SW, Suite 19T10, Atlanta, GA 30303-8927
(404) 974-9406 | OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov | <https://www.ed.gov/ocr>
