

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IEPs AND 504 PLANS AT-A-GLANCE

Both Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans can offer formal help for K–12 students who struggle in school. They're similar in some ways but very different in others. For more information about IEPs and 504 plans and how you can support your deaf child's learning experiences, please visit www.deafchildren.org.



This chart gives you an at-a-glance look at the differences between an IEP and a 504 Plan.

	IEP	504 Plan
What It Is	An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document and a process that explains the special education instruction, supports and services a child needs to succeed in school.	A plan developed by the school system to ensure that a child with a disability, as identified under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act receives accommodations that will allow for academic success and access to the learning environment.
Purpose	Provides individualized special education and related services to meet a child's unique needs. These services are provided at no cost to families.	Provides services and changes to the learning environment to enable students to learn alongside their peers.
The Law	The <u>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</u> This is a federal special education law for children with disabilities.	<u>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</u> This is a federal civil rights law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities.
Eligibility	A child must be identified as having a disability AND needing specialized instruction.	A person must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity but does not need special education services. A child may qualify for a 504 plan if they need accommodations to access the general curriculum.
Team Members	IDEA requires certain individuals to be part of the IEP team. These members include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Guardian • Special Education Teacher • Regular Education Teacher • Representative of Public Agency • Individual who can Interpret Evaluation Results • Related Services Providers • Parental guest • Child, required at age 16 	The rules about who's on the 504 team are less specific than they are for an IEP. The planning team may include: parents, school principal, classroom teachers, school nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, or others as needed. Parent involvement is not required for a 504 plan.
The Document Includes	The IEP includes learning goals and describes the services the school will provide. It's a written document. Here are some of the most important things the IEP must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present levels of academic and functional performance • Annual education goals and progress tracking • Services child will receive • Time/Duration • Accommodations • Modifications • Inclusion • Standardized test participation/accommodations 	A 504 plan is not required to be a written plan. Plans may look different from school to school there is no formal guidelines for what a plan should look like or include. A 504 plan generally includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific accommodations or supports for the child • Names of who will provide each service • Name of the person responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented.
Consent	A parent or caregiver must consent in writing for the school to evaluate a child. They must also consent in writing before the school can provide the services in an IEP.	504 regulations do not require schools to obtain parental consent for a 504 plan.
Review/Revision	The IEP team must review the IEP at least once a year. The child must be reevaluated every three years to determine whether services are still needed	The rules vary by state. Generally, a 504 plan is reviewed each year.
Resolving Conflicts	IDEA gives families several ways to resolve disputes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State complaint • Mediation • Resolution session • Due process filing 	Complaint to the <u>Office for Civil Rights (OCR)</u> .

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