

The Differences Between IEPs and 504 Plans

	IEP	504 Plan
Basic Description	A blueprint for a child's special education experience at school.	A blueprint or plan for how a child will have access to learning at school.
What It Does	Provides individualized special education and related services.	Provides services and changes to the learning environment to meet the needs of the child as adequately as other students.
What Law Applies	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Who is Eligible	There are two requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child has one or more of the 13 specific disabilities listed in IDEA. 2. The disability must affect the child's educational performance and/or ability to learn and benefit from general education curriculum, leading to a need for specialized instruction. 	There are two requirements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child has any disability. 2. The disability must interfere with the child's ability to learn in a general education classroom. Section 504 has a broader definition of a disability than IDEA.
Independent Educational Evaluation	Parents can ask the school district to pay for an independent educational evaluation (IEE) by an outside expert. The district doesn't have to agree. Parents may pay for an outside evaluation, but the district may not give it much weight.	Doesn't allow parents to ask for an IEE. Parents can always pay for an outside evaluation themselves.
Who Creates the Program/Plan	There are strict legal requirements about who participates. An IEP is	The rules about who's on the 504 team are less specific than they are for an IEP.

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	<p>created by an IEP team that must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The child's parents ▪ At least one of the child's general education teachers ▪ At least one special education teacher ▪ School psychologist or other specialist who can interpret evaluation results ▪ A district representative with authority over special education services ▪ With a few exceptions, the entire team must be present for IEP meetings. 	<p>A 504 plan is created by a team of people who are familiar with the child and who understand the evaluation data and special services options. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The child's parent ▪ General and special education teachers ▪ The school principal
What's in the Program/Plan	<p>The IEP sets learning goals for a child and describes the services the school will give her. It's a written document.</p> <p>Here are some of the most important things the IEP must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How the child is currently doing in school? ▪ Annual education goals for the child and how the school will track progress ▪ The services the child will get ▪ When services will start ▪ Any changes to the child's learning environment ▪ Any changes to what the child is expected to learn or know 	<p>There is no standard 504 plan. Unlike an IEP, a 504 plan doesn't have to be a written document.</p> <p>A 504 plan generally includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific accommodations, supports or services for the child ▪ Names of who will provide each service ▪ Name of the person responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How the child will participate in standardized tests? ▪ How the child will be included in general education classes 	
Parent Notice	When the school wants to change a child's services or placement, it has to tell parents in writing before the change. This is called prior written notice. Notice is also required for any IEP meetings and evaluations.	The school must notify parents about evaluation or a "significant change" in placement. Notice doesn't have to be in writing, but most schools do so anyway.
Parent Consent	A parent must consent in writing for the school to evaluate a child. Parents must also consent in writing before the school can provide IEP services.	A parent's consent is required for the school district to evaluate a child.
How Often It's Reviewed	The IEP team must review the IEP at least once a year. The students 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 and a reevaluation is done every three years or when needed.
How to Resolve Disputes	IDEA gives parents several specific ways to resolve disputes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mediation ▪ Due process complaint ▪ Resolution Session ▪ Civil Lawsuit ▪ State complaint ▪ Lawsuit 	Section 504 gives parents several options for resolving disagreements with the school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mediation ▪ Alternative dispute resolution ▪ Impartial hearing ▪ Complaint to the Office of Civil Rights ▪ Lawsuit
Funding and Costs	Students receive these services at no charge. States receive additional funding for eligible students.	Students receive these services at no charge. States do not receive extra funding for eligible students. But the federal government can take funding away from

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		programs (including schools) that don't comply. IDEA funds can't be used to serve students with 504 plans.