



What's the Difference Between an IEP and 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are both designed to support students with disabilities, but they have different purposes, eligibility criteria, and processes. Here are the main differences between the two:

Purpose:

504 Plan: A 504 Plan is designed to provide accommodations and modifications to students with disabilities to ensure they have equal access to education. It falls under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in federally funded programs (i.e. public schools).

IEP: An IEP is a legally binding document developed specifically for students with disabilities who require specialized instruction. It outlines the student's unique educational needs and specifies the services and supports necessary for them to make progress in school.

Eligibility:

504 Plan: Eligibility for a 504 Plan is based on a broader definition of disability. Your child may qualify for a 504 Plan if they have any disability that hinders learning in a general education classroom. Due to the broad nature of the eligibility for the 504 Plan, your child might qualify even if they don't qualify for an IEP. Many parents may not know that you can get a 504 a plan for anything from your child having allergies to medical and academic challenges.

IEP: Eligibility for an IEP is determined under the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#). Your child undergoes an evaluation to see if they qualify if they have one of the thirteen defined disability categories under IDEA, their disability affects their school performance, and they need specialized instruction. To learn more about requesting an evaluation, check out this [guide](#) on our [website!](#)

Development Process:

504 Plan: The development process for a 504 Plan involves a meeting between the student's parents or guardians, school staff, and other relevant individuals. The plan outlines accommodations and modifications necessary for your child to participate in and benefit from the general education curriculum alongside their peers. Unlike an IEP, which must be a written document, a 504 Plan is not required to be formally written down. This

means that the accommodations and modifications agreed upon for the student may be documented informally, such as through meeting notes or an informal agreement.

IEP: Developing an IEP involves a more comprehensive process. It is a written plan and includes assessments, goal-setting, and the creation of a detailed plan tailored to the student's individual needs. The IEP team, which includes parents or guardians, educators, and specialists, meets regularly to review progress and make adjustments as needed.

Services and Supports:

504 Plan: A 504 Plan primarily focuses on providing accommodations and modifications to support the student's access to the general education curriculum. These accommodations might include extended time on tests, preferential seating, or the use of assistive technology.

IEP: An IEP goes beyond accommodations to include specialized instruction, related services (such as speech therapy or counseling), and any other support necessary for the student to achieve their educational goals.

Legal Requirements:

504 Plan: Section 504 requires schools to provide equal access to education for students with disabilities, including the development of a 504 Plan if necessary.

IEP: IDEA mandates that eligible students receive an IEP, which provides a more comprehensive framework for addressing their educational needs.

Both 504 Plans and IEPs are designed to provide crucial support for students with disabilities, yet they each have unique roles and procedures tailored to individual needs. If you have any questions or need assistance navigating these processes, please don't hesitate to reach out to hello@loveyourschool.org! If you have more questions, we want to hear from you!

More Resources:

[7 Steps to Getting a 504 Plan for Your Child - Understood.Com](#)

[The ABCs of a 504 Plan - Raising Special Kids](#)

[Process For Developing IEPs – Arizona Department of Education](#)

[Requesting an Evaluation - Understood.Com](#)

[Evaluating School-Aged Children for Disability - Center for Parent Information and Resources](#)