

The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans

By The Understood Team (<https://www.understood.org> for extended details)

	IEP	504 Plan
Basic Description	A blueprint or plan 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	<p>Provides individualized special education and related services to meet the unique needs of the child.</p> <p>These services are provided at no cost to parents.</p>	<p>Provides services and changes to the learning environment to meet the needs of the child as adequately as other students.</p> <p>As with IEPs, a 504 plan is provided at no cost to parents.</p>
What Law Applies	<p>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</p> <p>This is a federal special education law for children with disabilities.</p>	<p>Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</p> <p>This is a federal civil rights law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities.</p>
Who Is Eligible	<p>To get an IEP, there are two requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child has one or more of the 13 specific disabilities listed in IDEA. Learning and attention issues may qualify. 2. The disability must affect the child's educational performance and/or ability to learn and benefit from the general education curriculum. 	<p>To get a 504 plan, there are two requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A child has any disability, which can include many learning or attention issues. 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. That's why a child who doesn't qualify for an IEP might still be able to get a 504 plan.
Who Creates the Program/Plan	IEP team including the child's parent	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; parents included.
What's in the Program/Plan	The IEP sets learning goals for a child and describes the services the school will give her. It's a written document.	There is no standard 504 plan. It generally includes specific accommodations, supports or services for the child.
Parent Notice & Consent	When the school wants to change a child's services or placement, it has to tell parents in writing <i>before</i> the change. Parents also have "stay put" rights to keep services in place while there's a dispute. Consent is needed for testing or IEP services.	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. Consent is needed for evaluation.