



504 Plans

A student who does not qualify for special education services via an Individual Education Program (IEP) may still qualify for services under a 504 plan if the disability is shown to limit a major life activity, or if the student needs help to participate in or benefit from educational programming.

Major life activities include but are not limited to walking, seeing, speaking, sitting, thinking, learning, breathing, concentrating, interacting with others, and staying on task. Students with depression or other mental health issues, behavior disorders, and temporary disabilities (broken arm, etc.) are also at times provided a 504 plan.

Examples of students who might be best served by a 504 plan and their accompanying accommodations might include:

- A student breaks his/her arm and cannot write; the school district provides someone to scribe for that student;
- Student is deaf. The school district provides an interpreter for the classroom and any extracurricular activities the student is involved in;
- Student has cancer, diabetes, epilepsy, migraines, allergies or asthma; the student is allowed to obtain treatment or medication during school hours, as needed;
- Student uses a wheelchair; the student is permitted to leave classes early to avoid hall traffic;
- Student is under a doctor's care for depression or anxiety, frequent behavioral problems, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); the student is given additional time for completing assignments and allowed to sit in the front of the classroom.

[IEPs and 504 Service Agreements, PA Department of Education, 2019](#)

Poor grades are not necessarily an indication of the need for a 504 plan. As you can see from the examples above, a student with a disability may achieve a high level of academic success but still be substantially limited in a major life activity due to their impairment. A high-achieving student may still qualify for

a 504 plan because of the disproportionate amount of time or effort the student must spend to read, write, or learn relative to typical peers.

To request a 504 plan, send an email to your child's teacher or principal. If you know the 504 coordinator/special education coordinator you may want to cc that person, as well, noting your child's diagnosis and/or disability and how this affects them at school. It is important to note that there are no timelines for the 504 process, though the school has to act within a "reasonable" time period. It would be appropriate to ask the school to acknowledge receipt of the initial letter and follow up if you haven't received any additional information.

A sample email can be found below:

Parents name
Address
City State Zip
Phone number
Email

Date

Dear Teacher or Principal:

My child, (name), is in the (grade) at (name of school). They have recently been diagnosed with (medical issue). This issue is affecting their performance in school. (Student) is experiencing difficulty (list the things the child struggles to do in the school setting).

These difficulties are negatively affecting their academic performance. I am requesting a meeting to discuss these issues, and that (student) be considered for an accommodation plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Thank you in advance. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

(parent)

If you have additional questions about the education of a school-aged child with a disability, you may wish to call the Pennsylvania Department of Education's ConsultLine, a toll-free information helpline.

ConsultLine specialists answer questions and provide information about special education, gifted education, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. You can reach ConsultLine at 800.879.2301.

Other resources you might find useful include:

[The Education Law Center](#)

[PA Bureau of Special Education](#)

[Office of Civil Rights \(OCR\) Fact Sheet on Section 504](#)

[The PEAL Center](#)

[The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(Pattan\)](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[Wrightslaw](#)

Achieva's disability advocates, (The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh and The Arc Erie County), provide information, resources, technical assistance, and individual advocacy on issues that impact children and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism and their families. We work with state and federal legislators and policymakers to ensure that the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities are protected and that they are afforded services for them to be included in their communities. We also work with state and federal legislators on budgetary issues that impact people with disabilities. Please contact us at 412.995.5000 x 486, 888.272.7229 x 486 (Toll-Free) or log onto www.achieva.info/contact-advocacy.