|  | **IEP** | **504 Plan** |
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| 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 | Provides individualized special education and related services to meet the unique needs of the child.These services are provided at no cost to parents. | Provides services and changes to the learning environment to meet the needs of the child as adequately as other students.As with IEPs, a 504 plan is provided at no cost to parents. |
| What Law Applies | The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)This is a federal special education law for children with disabilities. | Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973This is a federal civil rights law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities. |
| Who Is Eligible | To get an IEP, there are two requirements:1. A child has one or more of the [13 specific disabilities](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/conditions-covered-under-idea) listed in [IDEA](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/your-childs-rights/basics-about-childs-rights/individuals-with-disabilities-education-act-idea-what-you-need-to-know). 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, leading to the need for specialized instruction.
 | To get a 504 plan, there are two requirements: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](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/504-plan-terms-to-know) than IDEA. (It says a disability must substantially limit one or more basic life activities, such as learning.) That’s why a child who doesn’t qualify for an IEP might still be able to get a 504 plan.
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| Who Creates the Program/Plan | There are strict legal requirements about who participates. An IEP is created by an [IEP team](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/at-a-glance-whos-on-the-iep-team) that must include: The child’s parent, 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. | The rules about who’s on the 504 team are less specific than they are for an IEP.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:* The child’s parent
* General and special education teachers
* The school principal
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| How Often It’s Reviewed and Revised | The IEP team must review the IEP at least once a year.The student 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. |
| 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.Here are some of the most important things the IEP must include:* The child’s [present levels of academic and functional performance](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/setting-an-iep-baseline-plop-plaafp-and-plp)—how she is currently doing in school
* [Annual education goals](https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/setting-annual-iep-goals-what-you-need-to-know) for the child and how the school will track her progress
* The services the child will get—this may include special education, related, supplementary and extended school year services
* The timing of services—when they start, how often they occur and how long they last
* Any [accommodations](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/accommodations-what-they-are-and-how-they-work)—changes to the child’s learning environment
* Any [modifications](https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/modifications-what-you-need-to-know)—changes to what the child is expected to learn or know
* How the child will participate in standardized tests

How the child will be included in general education classes and school activities | There is no standard 504 plan. Unlike an IEP, a 504 plan doesn’t *have* to be a written document.A 504 plan generally includes the following:* 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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For more information and complete comparison list, visit www.understood.org