|  | **IEP** | **504 Plan** |
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| Basic Description | A blueprint or plan for a child’s [special education](javascript:void(0);) 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](javascript:void(0);) 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](javascript:void(0);) is provided at no cost to parents. |
| What Law Applies | The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](javascript:void(0);) (IDEA)  This is a federal special education law for children with disabilities. | [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](javascript:void(0);) of 1973  This 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](javascript:void(0);), 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. |
| 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 |
| 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](javascript:void(0);), supports or services for the child * Names of who will provide each service * Name of the person responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented |

For more information and complete comparison list, visit www.understood.org