

# ADHD

## Information for Parents

ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) makes it difficult for children to control their behavior. ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders, affecting 4–12 percent of school-aged children. While it is more common in boys, girls can also be diagnosed with ADHD.

Treatment and support can help students with ADHD manage their symptoms and succeed in school. It is, therefore, important for parents to get help for a child with ADHD as early as possible.

## Common ADHD Symptoms

Children with ADHD may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms.

### Inattention

- ▶ has a hard time paying attention or daydreams
- ▶ often does not listen
- ▶ pays little to no attention to details
- ▶ becomes bored quickly
- ▶ has difficulty beginning and completing tasks

### Hyperactivity

- ▶ cannot stay seated or is constantly moving
- ▶ frequently squirms and fidgets
- ▶ talks too much

### Impulsivity

- ▶ acts without thinking
- ▶ interrupts others
- ▶ exhibits unsafe behavior, such as running into the street without looking

*The term ADD (attention-deficit disorder) is sometimes used when a student has inattentive type ADHD. (A student with ADD does not have hyperactivity or impulsivity symptoms.)*

# Learning Disabilities

## Information for Parents

Learning disabilities impact specific academic skills, such as reading, writing, or math. They also often impact a child's organization and time-management skills, attention, and/or memory.

Individuals with learning disabilities don't see, hear, or understand things the same as other students. And because their brains are wired differently, they often have difficulty learning in a traditional classroom.

Learning disabilities are not caused by intellectual or physical disabilities. In fact, individuals with learning disabilities typically have average or above average intelligence.

## Specific Learning Disabilities

While learning disabilities are unique to each individual, the following are some of the most common learning disabilities.

- ▶ **Auditory Processing Disorder** is a condition that affects how someone receives verbal information and processes meaning.
- ▶ **Dyscalculia** impacts a person's ability to use and understand math. In addition to having difficulty in math class, individuals with this condition may have a hard time counting, using money, or telling time.
- ▶ **Dysgraphia** affects fine motor skills. Someone with this condition usually has illegible handwriting, and may also have issues with spacing, spelling, and putting thoughts into written words.
- ▶ **Dyslexia** affects the part of the brain that processes language. Words and letters appear "mixed up."

# IEP

## Information for Parents

An IEP, or Individualized Education Program, is a document created to address the unique needs of a child eligible for special education services. While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) outlines what IEPs should generally include, IEPs vary greatly from state to state, school to school, and child to child.

## IEP Eligibility

The following are the 13 categories of disabilities that enable students to be eligible for special education services and an IEP.

- ▶ Specific learning disability
- ▶ Other health impairment (includes ADHD)
- ▶ Autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Emotional disturbance
- ▶ Speech or language impairment
- ▶ Visual impairment, including blindness
- ▶ Deafness
- ▶ Hearing impairment
- ▶ Deaf-blindness
- ▶ Orthopedic impairment
- ▶ Intellectual disability
- ▶ Traumatic brain injury
- ▶ Multiple disabilities

## The Initial Evaluation

Once a student has been identified as possibly needing special education services, whether by parent request or school identification, the child is evaluated by the school.

If a student qualifies for services, a team uses the information from the evaluation to determine what services will best help that student succeed in school. The team then writes an IEP for the student.

Each IEP is unique, and the services outlined in an IEP will vary from student to student.

# 504 Plan

## Information for Parents

504 plans are developed to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the same education as their non-disabled peers.

A 504 plan doesn't provide individualized instruction; however, it does provide students with accommodations to help them succeed in the regular classroom.

### 504 Eligibility

Students with any disability may be eligible for a 504 plan, as long as the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., learning).

A 504 plan has a wider range of eligibility than an IEP, which makes a 504 plan a good option for students who don't qualify for special education services under IEP requirements.

### 504 Evaluation

504 plans often don't require extensive evaluations, but there are procedures to follow. Here's what you can do if you believe your child might qualify for a 504 plan.

- ▶ **Gather documentation** of your child's needs, such as medical diagnoses, grades, and any private evaluations that may have been done.
- ▶ **Send a request in writing** to the school's 504 coordinator documenting your child's needs. If you can't find the contact information on the school's website, contact the principal.
- ▶ Upon receiving your request, school officials will review your child's grades, test scores, medical history, and comments from teachers.
- ▶ **Collaborate on the 504 plan.** If your child qualifies, work with your school to find the best classroom accommodations for your child.

# IEP vs. 504 Plan

## Information for Parents

Both an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and a 504 plan help students with disabilities get the support they need to succeed in school. IEPs and 504 plans have a number of similarities, but there are also some significant differences.

If your child has a condition that adversely impacts his/her education, a well-written, well-implemented IEP or 504 plan will help ensure that your child gets the support and services they need.

	IEP	504 Plan
Legal Basis	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Purpose	To provide individualized special education services for eligible students	To provide students support (accommodations) in the regular classroom setting
Eligibility	To be eligible for an IEP a child's school performance must be "adversely affected" by a disability in one of the 13 IDEA disability categories	Students must have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., learning). Section 504 has a broader definition of disability than IDEA.
Contents	An IEP is a written document developed by an IEP team. It details a student's current educational performance, services, goals, accommodations, modifications, placement, and more.	There is no standard form for a 504 plan. Most 504 plans are written, but it's not a requirement. 504 plans generally include accommodations and information on who provides them.

# Special Education Terms

## Information for Parents

Navigating the special education services provided by your school can be confusing, and full of unfamiliar terms. The following are some of the terms you may hear as you work to support your child's success.

- ▶ **504 Plan:** A plan developed to ensure that students with disabilities receive the accommodations they need to succeed in the regular classroom
- ▶ **Accommodations:** Alterations that enable a student to work around a disability, without a change in the curriculum (e.g., giving answers orally instead of in writing)
- ▶ **Annual Review (AR):** Yearly meeting of an IEP team to assess a student's needs and progress
- ▶ **Assessment:** An evaluation used to identify a student's strengths, weaknesses, and progress
- ▶ **Assistive Technology (AT):** Technology devices used to help students perform tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible for them
- ▶ **Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP):** A plan specifically targeting one to three of a student's undesirable or disruptive classroom behaviors
- ▶ **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** The right to equal educational opportunities
- ▶ **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A document that defines the special education services to be delivered to students who qualify, as defined by IDEA (There are 13 categories of disabilities that make students eligible for an IEP.)
- ▶ **IEP Team:** The group of individuals who meets to discuss and make decisions on a student's IEP. An IEP team usually includes parents, teachers, counselors, and other special education staff.