

# 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.)*

## Treating ADHD

The outlook for children who have received an ADHD diagnosis is good, as long as they receive the proper treatment and support. Ask for input from your child's teachers, and discuss the following possible treatments with a counselor or therapist.

- ▶ Behavior therapy
- ▶ Individual and family counseling
- ▶ Medication
- ▶ School accommodations and interventions  
*Students with ADHD may be eligible for a 504 plan or an IEP (under the "other health impairment" category).*

No one treatment is right for every child. You and your child's treatment team need to work together to make sure your child has the best chance at success.

## Supporting Your Child

Parents play a crucial role in helping children with ADHD achieve success both in and out of the classroom. Here are ways you can support your child.

- ▶ **Create routines.** Have routines, from the time your child wakes up until bedtime. Stick to them.
- ▶ **Get organized.** Make sure everything has its own place and that your child consistently puts things in the correct place—especially important items like homework, backpack, and shoes.
- ▶ **Reduce distractions.** Provide an uncluttered, clean workspace for your child to do homework.
- ▶ **Break down large tasks.** Children with ADHD often become overwhelmed by large tasks. Help your child break large tasks and assignments into smaller, less daunting parts.
- ▶ **Be patient.** Find ways to diffuse difficult situations, and find calming strategies that work for your child.
- ▶ **Give praise.** Give frequent praise for small achievements.

*For more information, visit [chadd.org](http://chadd.org).*

# 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."

# Signs of Learning Disabilities

If your child seems to be having trouble with schoolwork, be on the lookout for the following.

- ▶ Extreme disorganization and/or poor time management skills
- ▶ Difficulty with one school subject in particular
- ▶ Very slow doing homework
- ▶ Memory problems
- ▶ Difficulty focusing on details
- ▶ Trouble expressing him/herself out loud or in writing
- ▶ A growing dislike of, or frustration with, school

*If you have concerns or suspect your child may have a learning disability, discuss your concerns with your child's teacher and/or counselor.*

## Supporting Your Child

Students with diagnosed learning disabilities are usually eligible to receive help and support through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan.

- ▶ **An IEP** is a document designed to meet the unique needs of a child who is eligible for special education services. An IEP often includes individualized, one-on-one instruction or tutoring.
- ▶ **A 504 plan** is developed to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support and accommodations they need to succeed in the general classroom. Accommodations often include extended test time, alternate test delivery methods, and more.

*Parents play a crucial role in helping a child with a learning disability succeed both in and out of school. A parent's support, love, and encouragement will help a child with a learning disability grow, thrive, and succeed in school.*

***For more information, visit [LDAamerica.org](http://LDAamerica.org)***

# 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 make students 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.

## Contents of an IEP

IEPs are personalized for each child, but all IEPs contain the following information.

- ▶ Current educational performance levels
- ▶ Measurable annual goals (what the child is expected to do or learn in the next 12 months)
- ▶ The specific educational services to be provided to the student (e.g., tutoring, speech therapy, specialized instruction) and how these services will be implemented

*Once an IEP is created, there is an IEP meeting during which all aspects of the IEP are explained to the student's parent(s).*

## Be an Advocate for Your Child

The following are ways you can be an advocate for your child—and ensure that your child is getting the support and services he/she needs.

- ▶ **Work with the school.** Regularly communicate with the school to give and receive updates on your child's progress.
- ▶ **Be prepared for IEP meetings.** When you and your child's IEP team meet, come prepared with questions and/or concerns.
- ▶ **Support your child.** Be patient, supportive, and encouraging, and look for ways to work with your child at home.
- ▶ **Ask questions.** If there's ever anything that confuses or concerns you, ask questions and get clarification.

*The best thing you can do for your child is to work together with the teachers and educators at your child's school. Like you, they want your child to thrive and succeed in school.*

*For more information, visit [understood.org](http://understood.org).*

# 504 Plan

## Information for Parents

A 504 plan is 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 various accommodations so they are able to 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.

## Accommodations

The following are examples of accommodations provided in 504 plans.

- ▶ Extended test times
- ▶ Technology aids
- ▶ Modified textbooks
- ▶ Adjusted class schedules
- ▶ Peer assistance with notetaking
- ▶ Verbal testing
- ▶ Specific seating assignment
- ▶ Behavior management support

## Be an Advocate for Your Child

The following are ways you can be an advocate for your child—and ensure that your child is getting the support and services he/she needs.

- ▶ **Work with the school.** Regularly communicate with the school to give and receive updates on your child's progress. Like you, everyone in the school wants your child to thrive and succeed.
- ▶ **Ask questions.** If there's ever anything that confuses or concerns you, ask questions and get clarification.
- ▶ **Be prepared for 504 plan meetings.** Meetings are not required, but an annual meeting is always a good idea. Before a new school year, call the school and ask for a 504 plan review. When you and your child's 504 team meet, come prepared with questions and/or concerns.
- ▶ **Support your child.** Be patient, supportive, and encouraging—and look for ways to work with your child at home.

*For more information, visit [understood.org](http://understood.org).*



# 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 he/she needs.

	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 modify a student's educational program 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.

# The Right Choice for Your Child

Many students qualify for both an IEP and a 504 plan. In these cases, it's up to the parents and the school to come up with the best support plan for that student.

## When an IEP is appropriate

- ▶ An IEP is the best choice if a student needs services that must occur outside the regular classroom.
- ▶ Examples of services provided may include, but are not limited to: tutoring, speech therapy, specialized instruction, occupational therapy.
- ▶ If the student is below grade level in achievement, an IEP may be the best option, though there are many other factors to consider as well.

## When a 504 plan is appropriate

- ▶ A 504 plan is appropriate when students generally function well in the regular classroom, but need extra supports (accommodations) to perform at their best.
- ▶ Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to: extra test time, audio textbooks, a specific seating assignment, peer assistance with notetaking, extra time on projects, oral tests.
- ▶ While rare, 504 plans can provide modifications such as alternative testing (fewer or different questions) and less demanding assignments.

*Many accommodations offered by 504 plans (e.g., extra test time, adaptive tools, extra breaks) may also be offered by IEPs, so it's important to focus on the whole child rather than individual problems and solutions when making a decision.*

*If your child is eligible for an IEP and/or a 504 plan, educators at your child's school will do everything in their power to help your child succeed. If you have any concerns, ask questions, and get clarification.*

# 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 and 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.

- ▶ **Inclusion:** The opportunity for students with disabilities to learn alongside their non-disabled peers in general education classrooms
- ▶ **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** The law that guarantees educational equality for students with disabilities
- ▶ **Intelligence Quotient (IQ):** The score derived from cognitive (intelligence) testing
- ▶ **Interventions:** Instructional methods designed to target a student's educational needs
- ▶ **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):**  
A requirement stating that, as much as possible, students with disabilities must be taught in the same setting as students without disabilities
- ▶ **Modifications:** Changes (or adaptations) to what is being taught or expected of a disabled student, making it possible for him/her to participate in a classroom with students who have no disabilities (e.g., giving a student an easier assignment)
- ▶ **Outcomes:** The specific, short-term, measurable goals included in an IEP
- ▶ **Performance-Based Tests:** Assessments that measure a student's academic performance and eligibility for special education services
- ▶ **Resource Teacher:** A special education teacher who helps students with learning difficulties
- ▶ **Response to Intervention (RTI):** The process by which the success of an intervention is examined and modified
- ▶ **Special Education:** Instruction that is specifically designed to bolster the success of qualified students

*For a comprehensive list of terms, visit [specialeducationguide.com/special-education-dictionary](http://specialeducationguide.com/special-education-dictionary).*