



Going to School with Dysautonomia

K-12

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504 vs. IEP

	IEP ^{1,3,4}	504 plan ^{2,3,5}
What is it?	An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs. This document is intended for children with a specific set of diagnoses who require special education services.	504 plan modifies a student's regular education program in a regular classroom setting. It is intended for children with a wide range of disabilities who are able to participate and succeed in a general education classroom.
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 1973 This is a federal civil rights law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities.
Who is eligible?	Students qualify if they have one or more of the 13 specific disabilities listed in IDEA. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Autism/ASD 2. Intellectual delay 3. Deafness 4. Visual impairment (not able to be corrected) 5. Hearing impairment 6. Deaf-blindness 7. Orthopedic impairment 8. Traumatic brain injury 9. Speech/language impairment 10. Multiple disabilities 11. Emotional impairment 12. Specific learning disability 	Students can qualify for 504 plans if they have physical or mental impairments that affect or limit any of their abilities to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk, breathe, eat, or sleep 2. Communicate, see, hear, or speak 3. Read, concentrate, think, or learn 4. Stand, bend, lift, or work



	<p>13. Other health impairment</p> <p>Many of the specific disabilities are really broad and cover a range of different conditions. 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.</p>	
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Common Accommodations/Modifications

What is an accommodation? Accommodations are designed to help kids learn the same material and meet the same expectations as their classmates. They are classroom/school based changes made by the teacher or school.^{1,2,3}

Examples of accommodations include:

- Preferential seating
- Rest breaks
- Flexibility in scheduling
- Access to food and drinks throughout the day (hydration and salty snacks)
- Extended time on tests and assignments
- Reduced homework or classwork (quality vs quantity)
- Verbal, visual, or technology aids
- Reduced handwriting/shortened assignment
- Notes provided
- Opportunity to answer aloud
- Adjusted class schedules or grading
- Verbal testing
- Excused lateness, absence, or missed classwork
- Pre-approved nurse's office visits and accompaniment to visits
- Special desk or chair
- Provide headsets to block noise
- A locker in close vicinity to classes
- An elevator pass
- Extra set of books for home



What is a modification? Kids who are far behind their peers may need changes, or modifications, to the curriculum. Kids who receive modifications are *not* expected to learn the same material as their classmates.^{1,3,5}

- Use true-false, multiple choice, or matching instead of essays
- Extended time on tests and quizzes
- Having tests read to them
- Spelling graded separately from content
- Allow take-home or open-book tests
- Adjusted classwork and homework assignments
- Extended time on all assignments
- Modified homework assignments
- Modified grades
- Elimination of PE
- Reduced writing for essays
- Provide a vocab list with definitions
- Provide possible answers to fill in the blank questions

How to apply for a 504⁵

1. Request for a 504: A teacher may request a 504 plan for a child that they see could use a little extra help. Parents can also request a 504 plan if they see a need or if a diagnosis or life event occurs that may impact their child's learning abilities. School districts typically have a coordinator who handles both IEP and 504 plans. Check the school website for the coordinator's name and contact information. If you can't find it, ask the principal. Send a formal letter to the coordinator. Give facts that support your concerns. For example, "My child has Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and is struggling in school due to constant musculoskeletal pain and fatigue."
2. Put together a 504 plan with the help of resources available to you. The coordinator will likely help in gathering the people to put a specific list of accommodations in place. There are no absolute rules as to who is involved but it may include the coordinator, the child's teachers, the school psychologist, the principal, and the parents. Additional information or a letter from the physician may also be helpful.
3. Most schools create written plans as a protection for themselves as well as the student to ensure everyone is on the same page. As a parent, it's a good idea to be sure your school provides a written and signed 504. This plan will list specific



accommodations or requirements that will make it possible for your child to succeed in a general education program.

How to apply for an IEP⁴

1. The first step is to formally request an evaluation to determine if your child has a disability. You can make the request through your child's teacher, school administrator or the school district office. School districts typically have a coordinator who handles both IEP and 504 plans. Check the school website for the coordinator's name and contact information. If you can't find it, ask the principal. Send a formal letter to the coordinator.
2. Your child will be evaluated by professionals provided by the school district to determine whether the child has a disability. If you disagree with the results of the evaluation, you can take your child for an independent evaluation and request that the school system pay for this evaluation.
3. An IEP is a legal document that is tailored to your child's specific special needs. It spells out exactly what services your child is to receive and why. The document features the child's classification, placement, services, goals, percentage of time in a mainstreamed classroom, a behavior plan if necessary, and other important information. The IEP is created at an IEP meeting by the parents, along with the Child Study Team – your child's teachers, therapists, a learning specialist, psychologist and social worker.

Hospital Homebound⁶

Hospital Homebound is a public school program designed for students who are hospitalized or homebound due to a medical or psychological condition, either acutely or chronically. Programs may vary by county or state, but they are in place to provide continuing academic support to students in a way that can be slightly different to traditional homeschooling. Some programs may require that students be out for a particular amount of time before being eligible. These programs are generally used as short term solutions although they can be ongoing or intermittent as well. The need for the program will be re-evaluated periodically per state requirements. What the program entails can be based on what the state provides and what grade your child is in. For example, for K-5th grade, a teacher may come to the home or hospital for a set number of hours each week, while middle and high school students may only have the option of virtual school. There may also be an option of bi-school enrollment, where the student is able to attend half of the day at their regular school and the other half doing virtual



school. In some cases, students may only be required to take their core classes (science, language arts, math, and history) and electives are excused. Coursework is generally done on a flexible schedule, but must be completed at the end of each quarter or by the end of the school year.

Getting into Hospital Homebound:

- 1) Look up hospital homebound for your county/state to see requirements and process. If your child is already enrolled in public school, you may also consider discussing the process with the school's counselor.
- 2) Fill out the application with certification from your physician and any other documentation required by the state and return it to the program.
- 3) Meet with the Hospital Homebound staff to discuss what will best meet your child's needs in terms of curriculum and delivery.

Homeschooling

Homeschooling is an option that many parents choose when they have a child with chronic illness. There are public, private, full time and part time options. For example, a public school may be primarily virtual while still allowing the student to take electives or after school activities at a brick and mortar location. Some virtual programs may not offer electives at other schools, but still have field trips or other optional social events.

Homeschooling process^{7,8}:

1. Look up state requirements
 - a. No two states are the same. Rules and regulations can vary significantly and may be different between public vs. private homeschooling programs.
 - b. There are also private "umbrella" programs that offer their program country-wide and may circumvent some of the state's requirements, but requirements like state testing is usually still necessary.
2. Research public and private options and determine what is best for your family. Some considerations may include:
 - a. Can you meet the requirements of homeschooling? Some require more parent participation than others. Some may require the parent to have a certain level of education. With all of them you will be required to take on helping your student through school, maintaining paperwork, and scheduling state exams when necessary.
 - b. Do you need an IEP with the homeschooling program? Public vs. private options may affect this, as well as state regulations. If IEPs aren't



available, there may be other options, but in other cases it is simply up the parents to accommodate for their child's needs.

- c. What kind of curriculum is important to you? Are you going to teach all of the classes? Are you going to hire a tutor or purchase virtual curriculums? Are there religious preferences?
 - d. What program can you afford? Most county schools have a homeschool option that is free. Some programs may allow you to choose what kind of curriculum you use, while others will require you to purchase specific ones. Some curriculums offer online classes while others give you the materials to teach your child yourself. There can be a wide range of curriculum fees based on what you choose.
3. Many (but not all) states require you to inform the state that you are homeschooling. Check with your state on how to officially remove your child from public school.

Links to Additional Helpful Info and Tips

Understood.org: [Differences between IEP and 504s](#) and [Pros and Cons of Homeschooling](#)

Pacer.org: [Parent Special Education Information](#)

US Department of Education <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

Dysautonomia Youth Network: [Educating The Dysautonomia Student](#)

[Homebound Instruction for Children who are Medically Complex](#)

[Homeschool State Laws](#)

[State Regulations of Private Schools](#)

[Dr. Oro: Advocacy in Education](#)



Sources:

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3. The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans. Understood.org. https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/the-difference-between-ieps-and-504-plans?gclid=Cj0KCQiAtvPjBRDPARIsAJfZz0rOksnMZrRpWPsFwNyYLRQZdaE81eZuK7V0bBbuEWy8dDfmqT3uMYgaAoCGEALw_wcB. Published 2019. Accessed June 25, 2019.
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