

IEP vs 504

IEPs are developed under the IDEA, a federal law specific to the education of students with disabilities.

Section 504 plans are authorized under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a federal civil rights law that protects all people with a qualifying disability from discrimination based on their disability.

IEPs are used when a student requires specialized instruction

504 plans are used when a student needs accommodations or modifications to programs and facilities

Student must fit one of the 14 disability eligibility categories

Section 504 has a broader definition of disability

The IDEA grants specific procedural safeguards that must be upheld

Section 504 contains some limited due process rights

Parents are part of the IEP team

No parental input is required to develop or implement a 504 plan

IEPs follow a specific format including evaluation timelines, goals, and objectives

504 plans are usually written documents but do not have to follow a specific format

IEPs require documenting measurable growth

Assures that a student will have equal access to public education and services

Generally, applies to public schools. May apply to non-public schools under certain circumstances.

Generally, applies to all schools that accept federal funding (public, private, religious)

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) at the Department of Education administers the IDEA and IEPs.

The Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Education administers Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and 504 plans.

No cost to parents

Designed to meet the individual student's needs

Require a qualifying disability – qualifications differ

Based off of an evaluation of the student – specific requirements differ