

MAMARONECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

1000 W Boston Post Road
Mamaroneck, NY 10543



Common Questions: IEPs and 504 Plans

Families are integral partners in the educational process in Mamaroneck Union Free School District. Meaningful collaboration between parents and schools is critical to ensuring that each child receives appropriate supports and opportunities to succeed. This FAQ is intended to give you the information you need to participate fully and confidently in decisions about your child's education.

1. What is the difference between an IEP and a 504 Plan?

An **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** is a detailed plan for students who qualify for special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is designed for students who qualify for special education services and need specialized instruction to make meaningful progress in school.

An official IEP document includes sections that address:

- Present levels of academic and functional performance
- Measurable annual goals
- Special education services
- Related services (if needed)
- Accommodations and/or modifications
- Program for placement in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

A **504 Plan** is developed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. It provides accommodations to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to learning.

A 504 Plan:

- Does not include specialized instruction
 - Provides accommodations (e.g., extended time, preferential seating, health supports)
 - Is designed to remove barriers to access
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2. Who qualifies for a 504 Plan?

A student qualifies if they:

- Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more **major life activities** (like learning, reading, concentrating, communicating, walking, regulating emotions, caring for oneself)
 - Do **not** need specialized instruction—only accommodations.
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3. What is the process for determining if my child is eligible for a 504 Plan?

Eligibility **begins with** a written request/referral for a 504 evaluation sent to school or district administrators or the school psychologist. The school team can also make a referral for a 504 evaluation.

Referrals often arise based on concerns related to a student's academic, behavioral, medical, or social challenges due to a suspected disability.

Parents may be asked to **provide**:

- Medical documentation
- Evaluation reports
- Information about how the condition impacts the student at home and school

The 504 committee will also **gather** information from other sources to understand the student's needs, such as:

- Classroom performance
- Grades and testing data
- Attendance records
- Teacher observations

The 504 committee **reviews** all data sources and determines eligibility based on the multiple data points available. A diagnosis alone does not automatically guarantee eligibility. The committee must determine whether the condition **significantly impacts** the student in a major life activity in the school setting compared to same-age peers.

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4. Who comprises a 504 meeting committee?

The following individuals can be members of the committee:

- School administrators
 - Teachers
 - Psychologists
 - School counselors
 - Parents
 - Student (generally more appropriate for older students)
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5. What kinds of accommodations are in a 504 Plan?

Examples of accommodations that remove barriers based on the student's disability:

- Extended time on tests
- Access to a computer
- Breaking up assignments into manageable parts
- Preferential seating
- Breaks during class
- Modified assignments
- Organizational assistance
- Health-related supports

Accommodations are discussed and agreed upon during the eligibility/annual meetings.

6. If my child has a 504 but does not use an accommodation, will it be removed?

The committee participating in the 504 meeting discusses the effectiveness of accommodations and determines if those accommodations continue to be appropriate or if a change should be made..

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7. Who qualifies for an IEP?

To qualify for an IEP a child must:

- Have one of **13** recognized disability categories outlined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
 - **Categories include:** learning disability, autism, speech/language impairment, other health impairment, emotional disability, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, traumatic brain injury, visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, deaf-blindness, deafness
 - Need **special education services** to make progress in school
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8. What is the process to determine if my child is eligible for an IEP?

Eligibility is determined by the school district's **Committee on Special Education (CSE)**, following a 3-step process:

1. Receipt of a referral/request for an evaluation
 - a. A referral for evaluation can be made by:
 - i. A parent
 - ii. A teacher
 - iii. A school administrator
2. Signed consent from parent/guardian to conduct testing
3. Comprehensive evaluation in all areas of suspected disability.
 - a. Testing will include: educational and psychological evaluations, classroom observations, and a social history
 - b. Testing may include: evaluations in the areas of speech/language, occupational, physical, vision, hearing, behavioral, psychiatric
4. Eligibility (CSE) Meeting
 - a. After evaluations are completed the CSE must determine:
 - i. Whether the student has one of the disability classifications under the IDEA
 - ii. Whether the disability impacts the student's educational performance
 - iii. Whether the student requires specialized instruction and/or related services to make meaningful progress

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A diagnosis alone does not automatically qualify a student for an IEP. The CSE must determine that the student needs special education services because of the impact of their needs on learning and school functioning. Decisions will be determined by evaluation data and student needs.

9. How do I request an evaluation for an IEP?

You can request an evaluation by:

- Writing a letter or email to your child's school or district administrator

Once the request is received, the school/district will respond to understand your concerns and outline the process.

10. What happens during the evaluation process (for an IEP)?

Your child will receive:

- Psychological evaluation
- Educational testing
- Speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, vision, or hearing evaluation (if needed)
- Classroom observations

A Social History will be conducted in which a Social Worker or School Psychologist will speak with parents/guardians in regard to early developmental history, family history and current functioning in school and at home.

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11. What are the timelines associated with an IEP in New York?

After you consent to evaluations:

- The school must complete evaluations
- The CSE must meet
- An IEP must be developed

The evaluations are completed within **60 calendar days** of consent. A meeting to determine eligibility is conducted within **60 school days** of consent.

12. What is an annual review meeting?

Your child's IEP must be reviewed at least once a year to:

- Review progress
 - Update goals
 - Determine if your child continues to meet eligibility for special education services
 - Recommend/Adjust program and/or services for the following year
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13. What is a reevaluation meeting?

A reevaluation meeting happens at least every **3 years** (or sooner if needed) to determine if your child still qualifies for an IEP and what services are appropriate.

14. Can my child receive both an IEP and a 504 Plan?

No. If a child has an IEP, it already includes accommodations, so a separate 504 Plan is not required.

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15. What is the difference between accommodations and modifications?

- **Accommodations:** Change *how* a student learns (e.g., extra time)
- **Modifications:** Change *what* a student is expected to learn

IEPs may include both; 504 Plans typically include accommodations only.

16. How will I know if my child is making progress?

For students with IEPs:

- Progress toward goals is reported to parents/guardians at the same time as report cards are shared.
- Teachers and service providers maintain progress monitoring data on your child's goals as outlined by the criteria and method on the IEP.

For students with 504 Plans:

- Teachers monitor the implementation of accommodations and academic performance. The team meets annually (though not mandated) to discuss progress and make adjustments as needed.
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17. Can services and/or accommodations change during the school year?

Yes. If a student's needs a change (for an IEP or 504 Plan):

- A meeting can be requested by the parent or school.
 - The team can revise the plan as needed.
 - With an IEP, a meeting to make a change is called a Requested Review meeting.
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18. What is Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)?

LRE means students with disabilities are educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Placement decisions are based on individual student needs.

19. What is transition planning?

Transition planning is a part of the IEP process that helps prepare students for life after high school. The goal is to support students in developing the skills, experiences, and plans needed for adulthood based on their strengths, interests, and future goals.

In New York, transition planning typically begins during the year a student turns 15, although planning can begin earlier as deemed appropriate.

Transition planning looks at goals for a student in areas such as:

- Education or college
 - Job training or employment
 - Independent living skills
 - Community participation
 - Social and self-advocacy skills
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20. What if I have placed my child in a private/non-public school?

If your child attends a private school that you have placed them in, and has an IEP, they may still receive some special education support, but the services are often different from what is available in a public school. The public school district where the private school is located is responsible for reviewing and considering services for eligible students enrolled by their parents in private schools.

The main difference between private and public school settings is that a classified student would receive an individualized education service program (IESP) in the private school. The public school district is not required to provide your child with a special education **program** in the private school setting. Instead they can provide special education **services** to support the

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student in the private school setting. These services (such as resource room, speech/language, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, vision, and hearing) are conducted in a “pull-out” format.

21. What happens if we move and my child has an IEP?

If you move:

- Within the state: The new district will review your child’s current IEP and more than likely provide comparable services.
 - Out of state: The new district will review your child’s records and determine eligibility under their state guidelines.
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22. What are my rights as a parent?

You have the right to:

- Participate in all meetings
- Receive written notice of decisions
- Access your child’s records
- Give or deny consent
- Challenge decisions

These rights are explained in a document called **Procedural Safeguards Notice**, which can be viewed [here](#).
