



# Section 504 Guide & Model Policies and Procedures

A comprehensive guide and model policies and procedures  
for Tennessee's Local Education Agencies on Section 504 of  
the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

May 2013

# Contents

Introduction	5
Frequently Used Terms	6
Overview	8
Local Education Agency Responsibilities	11
Frequently Asked Questions	
Generally	15
Assessment of Academic Skills	17
Discipline	18
Grievances and Due Process	19
Accessibility	20
Employment	21
Major Differences in IDEA and Section 504	23
Appendix	25
Section 504 Coordinator: Duties and Responsibilities	26
Model Notice of Nondiscrimination	27
Model Annual Notice to Parents	28
Model Notice of Procedural Safeguards	29
Model Section 504 Parental Rights	31
Model Section 504 Informational Notice	32
Model Policy – Section 504 Complaint/Grievance Procedures	33
Model Section 504 Complaint/Grievance Form	34
Model Section 504 Referral and Recommendations	35
Model Notice of Action/Consent	36
Model Notice of Section 504 Committee Meeting	37
Model Release of Information Form	38
Model Letter to Physician Regarding Medical Concerns	39
Model Physician’s Questionnaire for Medical Concerns	40
Model Parent/Student Rights in Identification, Evaluation, Placement	41
Model Receipt of Notice of Procedural Safeguards and Rights	43
Model Annual Review Notice	44
Model Section 504 Student Eligibility/Service Plan Form	45
Model Service Student Accommodation Plan	48
Model Alternative Learning Plan	50
Model Student Behavior Plan	52
Model Due Process Hearing Procedures	54
Model Request for Section Due Process Hearing Form	57

For further information contact  
Assistant General Counsel for Civil Rights  
(615) 253-1550

It is the policy of the State Board of Education and a priority of the Tennessee Department of Education that there will be no discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, color, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age or disability in any educational programs, activities, or employment.

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Nashville, Tennessee 37243

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## Acknowledgment

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for local education agencies (LEAs) regarding their obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II), and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAA).

This document serves as guidance to Section 504 Coordinators, ADA Coordinators, LEA staff and other agencies serving students with disabilities in the development of policies and procedures required by the aforementioned federal laws. This document includes model policies and procedures that comply with the mandates of Section 504.

Adherence to Section 504 and Title II is mandated by the U.S. Department of Education for the continued receipt of federal funds. Although TDOE cannot mandate adherence to the guidance provided in this document, nor the adoption of the model policies and procedures contained herein, such adherence and adoption are strongly encouraged.

This document was reviewed for content by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Atlanta, Georgia. However, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), pursuant to its policy, did not endorse this document.

# Introduction

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights statute which provides: “No otherwise qualified individual with handicaps in the United States...shall, solely by reason of his/her handicap, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” *29 USC § 794.*

The purpose of this document is to guide LEAs so that they may be aware of their obligations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. LEAs may contact the TDOE Assistant General Counsel for Civil Rights at (615) 253-1550 for technical assistance.

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## Frequently Used Terms

**Educational Placement** A program and/or service setting with students who are not disabled, to the maximum extent appropriate to the needs of the student.

**Eligibility** A student is eligible if the student: (a) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities; (b) has a record of such an impairment; or (c) is regarded as having such an impairment.

**Equal Access** An equal opportunity for a qualified person with a disability to participate in or benefit from educational aids, benefits, or services.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** Refers to the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities or impairments as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities or impairments are met and is based upon adherence to procedures that satisfy the requirements pertaining to educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards. LEAs must provide FAPE to each qualified disabled or impaired person in their jurisdiction. FAPE must be provided without cost.

**Hidden Disabilities** Physical or mental impairments that are not readily apparent to others. They include such conditions and diseases as specific learning disabilities, diabetes, epilepsy, allergy, or chronic illnesses. A chronic illness involves a recurring and long-term disability such as heart disease, kidney or liver disease, high blood pressure, or ulcers.

**Major Bodily Functions** Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), such functions include immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. This list is not exhaustive.

**Major Life Activity** Functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. This list is not exhaustive. In the ADAAA, additional examples include eating, sleeping, standing, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, and communicating. See also Major Bodily Functions.

**Manifestation Determination** Meeting of the review committee to determine whether the student's behavior is caused by, or has a direct and substantial relationship to, his/her disability or impairment subsequent to a violation of disciplinary rules by the student.

**Parent** A biological or adoptive parent or guardian, surrogate parent, someone acting in place of a parent (including a grandparent, stepparent, or other relative) with whom the student lives, or someone who is legally responsible for the student.

**Physical or Mental Impairment** (a) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or (b) any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation, intellectual disability, organic brain

syndrome, emotional or mental illness and specific learning disabilities. A physical or mental impairment does not constitute a disability unless its severity is such that it results in a substantial limitation of one or more major life activities.

**Procedural Safeguards** A system of procedures established and implemented by the LEA that provides the parent or guardian with notice, an opportunity to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with parental participation and representation by counsel, if desired, and a hearing when there is a disagreement between the parents and the LEA regarding the identification, evaluation or educational placement of an eligible student.

**Related Services** Assistive and supportive services including psychological counseling, speech therapy, physical therapy and transportation. This is not an exhaustive list.

**Section 504 Coordinator** A responsible employee of a recipient of federal funds that employs 15 or more persons who coordinates compliance efforts.

**Section 504 Review Committee** A group of persons knowledgeable about the student, knowledgeable about the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, the legal requirements to place a disabled student in the least restrictive environment, and the legal obligation to provide comparable facilities to disabled students. The committee shall include the coordinator or designee, parents, and professionals knowledgeable about the student.

**Significant Change in Placement** A substantial and fundamental change in a student's educational program. Whether a change in facilities is a significant change in placement must be determined on a case by case basis. If a student is receiving the same services and programming in substantially the same environment, there has not been a significant change in placement. Transfers made due to age considerations, including graduation, are significant changes in placement.

**Student Services/Section 504 Plan** A written document developed by a review committee that states the nature of the concern, the specific modifications, and the related support services to be provided to an eligible student.

**Substantially Limits** Means: (a) the inability to perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform; or (b) substantial limitation as to the condition, manner or duration under which an individual can perform a particular major life activity as compared to the condition, manner, or duration which the average person in the general population can perform that same major life activity. OCR has declined to formally interpret the term in non-regulatory guidance. Decisions should be made by the review committee on a case by case basis.

# Overview

## What is Section 504?

Section 504 is a federal civil rights law designed to eliminate disability discrimination in programs and activities that receive federal funds. All LEAs receive federal funds, therefore denying a disabled student a FAPE constitutes disability discrimination.

## What is a "program or activity"?

The term includes all levels of TDOE and all LEAs or schools receiving federal funds regardless of whether the specific program or activity involved is a direct recipient of federal funds. If an LEA contracts with alternative education programs, it must insure that a student with disabilities has an equal opportunity to participate in alternative education, even though the programs themselves do not directly receive any federal funds.

## Who is a "qualified" individual with a disability?

For elementary and secondary education programs, regulations define a qualified individual with a disability as one who is: (a) of an age during which non-disabled individuals are provided with educational services; (b) of any age during which it is mandatory under state law to provide such services to disabled individuals; or (c) entitled to FAPE under IDEA.

## Who is eligible under Section 504?

Section 504 covers qualified students with disabilities who attend LEAs receiving federal funds. To be protected, a student must be determined to: (a) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (b) have a record of such impairment; or (c) be regarded as having such impairment.

LEAs must provide FAPE to qualified students in their jurisdictions who may have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

The meaning of "disabled student" was substantially broadened by the American's with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, which became effective on January 1, 2009. Congress amended the ADA in 2008 to create "clear, strong, consistent, enforceable standards" to broaden who qualifies as a "disabled person" under Section 504 and the ADA. Therefore, the term "physical or mental impairment" is not limited to any specific diseases or categories of medical conditions. Additionally, the impairment need not prevent, or significantly or severely restrict a student in performing a major life activity to be considered "substantially limiting."

Practically any activity that is of importance to a school-aged student's daily life now qualifies as a "major life activity," and an impairment that substantially limits one major life activity need not limit other major life activities to be considered a disability. Major life activities, as defined in the Section 504 regulations, include functions such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working. This list is not exhaustive. Other functions can be major life activities for purposes of Section 504. In the Amendments Act, Congress provided additional examples of general activities that are major life activities, including



eating, sleeping, standing, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, and communicating. Congress also provided a non-exhaustive list of examples of “major bodily functions” that are major life activities, such as the functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions. The Section 504 regulatory provision, though not as comprehensive as the Amendments Act, is still valid – the regulatory provision’s list of examples of major life activities is not exclusive, and an activity or function not specifically listed in the regulatory provision can nonetheless be a major life activity.

When determining eligibility, a student should be compared to non-disabled age/grade-level peers.

### Mitigating Measures

Mitigating measures used by a disabled student to manage an impairment or lessen the impact of an impairment (e.g. medication, medical devices, related aids and services, etc.) should be disregarded when determining whether a student’s impairment constitutes a disability. There is one exception to the mitigating measures analysis. The ameliorative effects of the mitigating measures of ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses shall be considered in determining if the impairment substantially limits a major life activity. “Ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses” are lenses that are intended to fully correct visual acuity or eliminate refractive error, whereas “low-vision devices” are devices that magnify, enhance, or otherwise augment a visual image.

### Temporary Impairments

A temporary impairment is a disability under Section 504 and the ADA if it is severe enough that it substantially limits a major life activity for a student. The issue of whether a temporary impairment is substantial enough to be a disability must be resolved on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration both, the duration (or expected duration) of the impairment and the extent to which it actually limits a major life activity of the affected individual.

### Episodic Impairments

An impairment that is episodic or in remission (e.g. epilepsy, cancer, bipolar disorder, etc.) is a disability under Section 504 and the ADA, if it substantially limits a major life activity for a student when active. Such a student is entitled to a FAPE.

### Transitory Impairments

Impairment with an actual or expected duration of six (6) months or less. In the ADAAA, Congress clarified that an individual is not “regarded as” an individual with a disability if the impairment is transitory or minor.

## **What is a Free Appropriate Public Education Under Section 504?**

FAPE refers to the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet individual education needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met and is based upon adherence to procedures that

satisfy the requirements pertaining to educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards.

Related aids and services include any aid or service that a student needs to participate in and benefit from an LEA's educational program.

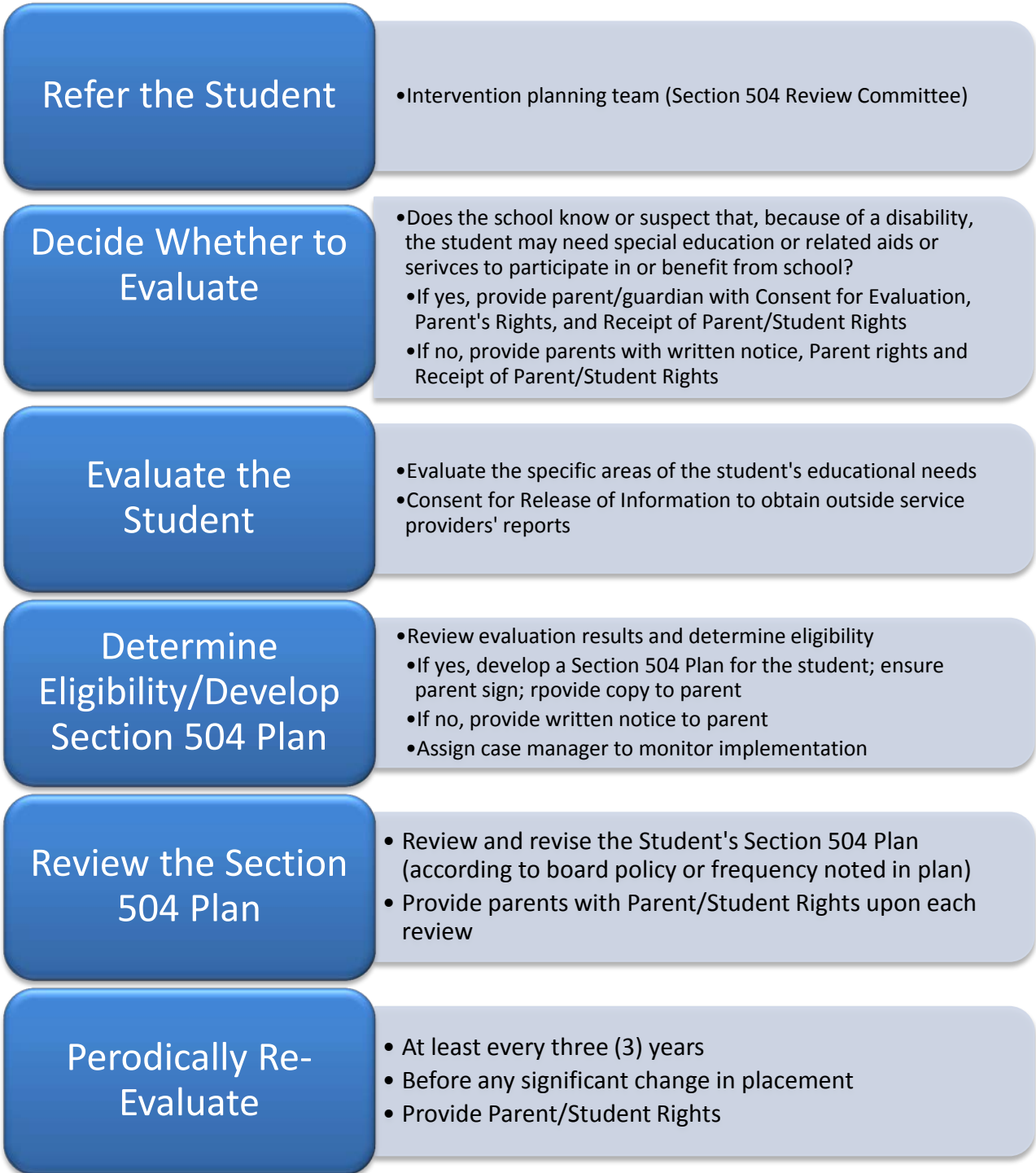
### **Compliance Requirements**

LEAs must:

1. Provide written assurance of non-discrimination whenever the LEA receives federal funds. .
2. Designate an employee to coordinate its compliance efforts. (Applies to recipients of federal funds with 15 or more employees.)
3. Adopt grievance procedures to resolve complaints alleging any action prohibited by federal regulations. (Applies to recipients of federal funds with 15 or more employees). This does not apply to applicants for employment.
4. Provide notice to students, parents, employees, unions, and professional organizations of nondiscrimination in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities (if 15 or more employees). Notice must also specify the responsible employee. Notice must be included in student/parent handbook.
5. Annually identify and locate all qualified students in the LEA's geographic area who are not receiving a public education.
6. Annually notify students who are disabled and their parents of the LEA's responsibilities.
7. Provide parents with procedural safeguards including the right to a due process hearing. Each LEA must develop a procedure to ensure impartial due process hearings. The employment of a hearing officer is the financial responsibility of the LEA.

# Local Education Agency Responsibilities

## Section 504 Process Flow Chart



## **The Section 504 Process**

### **1. Student Referrals**

Parents, teachers, diagnosticians, and building administrators may refer for an evaluation a student who needs or is believed to need special education and/or related services because of a disability. The person may obtain a written referral form from the coordinator, who will assist both the parent and the staff in collecting appropriate student data, as well as, providing parents with appropriate notification. The coordinator will present these written requests to the review committee for determination of educational need.

### **2. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

LEAs must provide FAPE (regular or special education and related aids and services) to a qualified student with a disability in the LEA's jurisdiction. Instruction must be individually designed to meet the needs of the student as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students. It is recommended that the LEA document that the review committee convened and specify the agreed upon services in a document called a Student Services/Section 504 Plan. The quality of educational services provided to students with disabilities must be equivalent to the services provided to non-disabled students. Teachers must be trained in the instruction of persons with the disability in question and appropriate materials and equipment must be available.

*Transportation* If an LEA provides transportation to all its students within a certain geographic area, it may not discriminate in its provision of transportation to students with disabilities or impairments. The length of the bus rides for students with disabilities should not be longer than that of non-disabled students. If a LEA places a student in a program not operated by the LEA, the LEA must insure that adequate transportation to and from the program is provided at no greater cost than would be incurred by the parent if the student were placed in the program operated by the LEA.

*Residential Placement* The placement must be provided by the LEA at no cost to the parent if necessary to provide FAPE. This includes educational services, non-medical care and room and board.

*Parental Placements* If the LEA offers FAPE to a student but the parent chooses to place the student elsewhere, the LEA is not responsible to pay for the placement. Disagreements regarding program availability and financial responsibility are subject to due process procedures.

### **3. Evaluations**

An evaluation is usually initiated by a request from a parent or a referral from the classroom teacher. An LEA is required to evaluate the student only when it has reason to believe the student needs special education and related services. However, it is best practice to evaluate the student unless there is no reason to suspect the student might be eligible. If a student needs or is believed to need special education or related services, the LEA must evaluate the student prior to initial placement in a regular or special education program and before any significant change in placement. A full evaluation is not required when neither the LEA nor the parents believe that the student is in need of special education or related services. However, the LEA should have current

medical, educational, and/or behavioral information in order to make needed modifications to the student's educational program.

The LEA must establish policies and procedures for evaluation and placement which assure that tests and other evaluation materials: have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used and are administered by trained personnel; are tailored to assess educational need and are not merely based on IQ scores; and reflect aptitude, achievement or whatever else the tests purport to measure and do not reflect the student's impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills (unless the test is designed to measure these particular deficits). There is no entitlement to an independent educational evaluation in Section 504.

Prior to implementation of services, the parents must be notified and the student must be evaluated by qualified personnel using appropriate assessment methods and tools. Parental consent and prior notice of rights are required before a student is initially evaluated and/or placed. If a parent refuses consent for an initial evaluation and the LEA suspects a student is eligible, LEAs may use due process hearing procedures to seek to override the parents' denial of consent.

The evaluation/screening and placement process is determined by the type of suspected disability and the type of services the student may need. The evaluation must be sufficient to accurately and completely assess the nature and extent of the disability in order to recommend appropriate services. Utilization of the state regulations and evaluation standards for IDEA is an acceptable means of meeting the evaluation requirements of Section 504. Parents are entitled to a copy of the eligibility report and if eligible, Student Service/Section 504 Plan. If parents do not attend the meeting, a copy should be sent to them.

#### **4. Placement**

In interpreting evaluation data and making placement decisions, the review committee must:

- Draw upon information from a variety of sources;
- Ensure that all information is documented and considered;
- Ensure that the placement decision is made by a group of persons including those who are knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation data and placement options; and
- Ensure that the student is educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. To the maximum extent appropriate, the LEA must educate students who are disabled with non-disabled students in the least restrictive environment. In order to remove a student from the regular educational environment, the LEA must demonstrate that education of the student in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

#### **5. Section 504 Review Committee**

The review committee has the responsibility of determining eligibility and appropriate modifications, related aids or services for the student, and should be composed of the coordinator, principal, parents and professionals knowledgeable about the student. Other persons may be invited to attend the committee meeting by the parents and/or the LEA. The group should review the nature of the disability, how it affects the student's education, and thereafter, decide what, if any, services are necessary for the provision of a FAPE. Decisions about eligibility and services must

be documented in the student's file and reviewed periodically. The review committee meeting may proceed when the parents are not present, but every effort should be made and documented by the coordinator to have parents attend the meeting, such as calling them or rescheduling the meeting. The function of the review committee is to consider the student's eligibility, initial placement program and services needed, conduct program reviews, and periodically review the student's program.

## **6. Student Service/Section 504 Plan**

The plan developed by the review committee is based upon the individual student's educational needs and least restrictive environment considerations. The plan will document the committee's decisions and will include the date, student information, accommodations and services, and signatures and recommendations of members present at the meeting. A copy of the plan will be made available to appropriate school personnel when it contains accommodations and supportive service provisions to be implemented at school. The plan will be filed and maintained in each student's education records.

## **7. Reevaluations**

Section 504 requires periodic reevaluations. There is no specified time limit. LEAs will be in compliance if they reevaluate the student every three years. A reevaluation must be conducted before any significant change in placement. Reevaluation can consist of a comprehensive evaluation or a review of the student data and plan. Examples of significant changes in placement which require reevaluation include: expulsion; series of suspensions which exceed 10 days (consideration must be given to the frequency of suspensions, the length of each and their proximity to one another); transferring a student to home instruction; graduation from high school; and, significantly changing the composition of the student's class (e.g., moving the student from regular education to the resource room).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Generally

#### **How is discrimination defined in Section 504?**

Discrimination occurs when a recipient of federal funds:

1. Denies, on the basis of a disability, a qualified person the opportunity to participate in or benefit from an aid, benefit or service (e.g., LEA refusing to allow any student with a disability the opportunity to be on the honor roll; denial of credit to a student whose absenteeism is related to his/her disabling condition; expelling a student for behavior related to his/her disability; refusing to dispense medication to a student who could not attend school otherwise.)
2. Denies a qualified person an opportunity to participate in or benefit from an aid, benefit, or service that is *equal* to that afforded others.
3. Fails to provide aids, benefits, or services to a qualified person that are as effective as those provided to non-disabled persons (e.g., providing him/her with an interpreter instead of placing a student with a hearing impairment in the front row). *Note:* "Equally effective" means *equivalent* as opposed to identical. Moreover, to be equally effective, an aid, benefit or service need not produce equal results; it must merely afford an equal opportunity to achieve equal results.
4. Provides different or separate aids, benefits or services to disabled persons or any class of disabled persons unless such action is necessary to provide aid, benefits or services that are as effective those provided to others.
5. Aids or perpetuates discrimination against disabled persons by providing significant assistance to an agency, organization or person that discriminates on the basis of a disability in providing any aid, benefit, or service to beneficiaries of the program (e.g., sponsoring a student organization that excludes persons with disabilities).
6. Denies a person with a disability the opportunity to participate as a member of a planning or advisory board strictly because of their disability.
7. Otherwise limits the enjoyment of any right, privilege, advantage or opportunity enjoyed by others.
8. In determining the site or location of a facility makes selections which effectively exclude persons with disabilities, denies them the benefits of, or otherwise subjects them to discrimination.

#### **What is the difference between Section 504 and IDEA eligibility?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specifically lists the disabling conditions which entitle a student to receive special education and related services. Additionally, in order to receive services under IDEA, the disabling condition must result in a need for special education and related services. Section 504 is much broader. There is no list of disabling conditions. The

regulations also make clear that certain conditions, such as drug or alcohol addiction, and heart disease, which would not qualify a student under IDEA, may be disabling conditions under Section 504.

### **May an LEA use IDEA funds to serve student eligible under Section 504 but not IDEA?**

No. However, the LEA may use IDEA funds to evaluate the student if the LEA suspects the student may be eligible for special education and related services as defined by IDEA.

### **Does Section 504 have a Child Find requirement?**

Yes. The LEA must annually identify and locate every qualified student residing in its jurisdiction and take any necessary steps to notify those students and their parents. If the LEA chooses, it may undertake screenings to meet this requirement.

### **Who enforces Section 504?**

OCR enforces four federal statutes that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; sex discrimination is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; discrimination on the basis of disability is prohibited by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990; and age discrimination is prohibited by the Age Discrimination Act of 1975. OCR also assists other departmental offices in ensuring that federal assistance administered by those offices is consistent with federal civil rights laws.

OCR has authority to enforce these laws in all programs and activities that receive federal funds. These include programs and activities operated by institutions and agencies, such as state education agencies, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, vocational schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies.

OCR investigates complaints filed by individuals, or their representatives, who allege that they have been discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age. It also initiates compliance reviews of recipient institutions and agencies, and monitors the progress in eliminating discriminatory practices of institutions and agencies that are implementing plans negotiated by it. It attempts to resolve compliance problems through negotiation. However, if unable to do so, it initiates the actions necessary to enforce the law.

Persons who allege that an LEA has violated a provision of Section 504 may file a complaint with OCR. The address of the regional office which covers Tennessee is:

United States Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Atlanta Office, Southern Division  
61 Forsyth St., S.W.  
Suite 19T70  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 974-9406



## **Does Section 504 address participation in non-academic services and extracurricular activities?**

Yes. LEAs must provide equal opportunity in areas such as counseling, physical education, recreation, athletics, transportation, health services, recreational activities, special interest groups or clubs, referrals to other agencies and employment. The regulations give students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular services and extend the least restrictive environment mandate to extracurricular activities.

- **Counseling Services** LEAs must provide counseling services without discrimination on the basis of disability. LEAs may not counsel students with a disability toward more restrictive career objectives.
- **Extracurricular Activities and Athletics** LEAs must provide an equal opportunity for students with disabilities to participate. LEAs should create separate extracurricular activities and athletics for students who are disabled and cannot participate in existing extracurricular activities or athletics.

## **What are parent's rights for inspecting and reviewing educational records under Section 504?**

Parents or eligible students must be given the right to inspect and review education records collected, maintained or used for purposes of referring, evaluating, placing or educating the student receiving accommodations. LEAs must comply with a parent's request to access records within a reasonable period of time, but no more than 45 calendar days after receiving the request. Records must be made available for inspection and review at other mutually agreeable time. Reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the records must be granted. If circumstances effectively prevent the person or eligible student from exercising the right to inspect and review the record, the LEA must provide the parent or student with a copy of the requested records.

## **Are there any special considerations for students who have AIDS or HIV Infection?**

Students with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), AIDS - related complex (ARC) or otherwise infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV infected) are individuals with disabilities. They either qualify as actually having a physical impairment, which substantially limits a major life activity, or are regarded as having such a disability. Placement decisions must be made by the review committee.

## **Assessment of Academic Skills**

### **Must students complete all curriculum requirements?**

It depends. While eligible students must complete curriculum requirements established by the state board of education in order to graduate from high school, exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual needs of the student.

## **What are appropriate accommodations for participating in statewide assessments?**

Generally, test administration procedures that do not cause test results to be invalid may be used. The decision to use a particular accommodation with a student should be made on an individual basis and should take into consideration the needs of the student, accommodations that are allowable pursuant to state testing and assessment guidelines and whether the student routinely receives the accommodation in classroom instruction. Accommodations should not be introduced for the first time during a statewide assessment. The review committee must make the decision regarding testing accommodations and document them in the plan.

## **Discipline**

### **Can an eligible student be subjected to disciplinary action?**

Yes. An eligible student is subject to the school's student code of conduct. The student's plan may include a behavior management plan, which outlines disciplinary options to be used. In some cases, inappropriate behavior may cause the student to be removed from classes and/or school for a few days or to be sent to an alternative education program, such as a supervised setting separate from regular classes or in-school suspension. In either case, the student must be given the opportunity to complete assignments and earn course credit.

When it is determined that the disabled student's misconduct is caused by the disabling condition, the student may not be suspended or expelled from school. The review committee will then determine whether the student's current educational placement or accommodation plan is appropriate. OCR interprets Section 504 as requiring LEAs to develop an individualized behavior management plan for a student with a disability when the student's behavior significantly interferes with his ability to benefit from his education. The purpose of the behavior management plan is to maintain the student's placement in the least restrictive environment to meet educational needs. Removal for more than 10 days requires the same guidelines as for special education students. The student is entitled to due process protections.

### **Must an LEA conduct a manifestation determination before suspending or expelling a student with a disability?**

Yes. The review committee must conduct a manifestation determination when a student with a disability commits a disciplinary infraction that may result in expulsion or suspension from school for more than 10 consecutive school days or when a series of suspensions create a pattern of exclusions that constitute a significant change in placement. The determination must be based on current information. The determination of whether a series of suspensions is a significant change of placement will be made on a case-by-case basis by the review committee. The factors that will be considered will be the length of each suspension, the proximity of the suspension to one another, and the total amount of time the disabled student is suspended from school.

The review committee must then determine whether the student's current educational placement is appropriate. If it is determined by the review committee that the misconduct is not caused by the student's disabling condition, the student may be disciplined in the same manner as a non-disabled student, including expulsion from school.

If it is determined by the review committee that the misconduct is caused by the disability, the student may not be expelled.

### **If the LEA suspects that a student has an alcohol or drug problem, what should it do?**

If an LEA suspects that the drug or alcohol problem may be substantially limiting a major life activity, such as learning, the LEA is obligated to evaluate the student at the LEA's expense. If the evaluation verifies the existence of a disabling condition, which substantially limits a major life activity, the student is considered disabled. The LEA must then convene a review committee meeting. The committee will design an educational program to meet the student's individual needs and give notice to the student's parents of their rights. The LEA must periodically reevaluate the student and may not make a significant change in the student's placement without providing the parent with notice and conducting a reevaluation. *NOTE: Section 504 does not require LEAs to provide treatment for substance abuse.*

### **What if the student is caught using drugs at school?**

An LEA is entitled to enforce its rules prohibiting the use, sale or possession of drugs or alcohol by drug- or alcohol-addicted students. Although using drugs at school is related to drug addicted student's disability, the LEA may still use its normal disciplinary policies, including expulsion. This is a notable exception to the general prohibition against expelling a student for behavior related to a disability under Section 504 and the IDEA.

## **Grievances and Due Process**

### **What are the standards governing grievance and due process procedures?**

The LEA must adopt a grievance procedure for a student, parent or employee to file a grievance or invoke due process hearing rights concerning alleged violations. OCR advises that a compliant grievance procedure must include reasonable time frames, an opportunity to present evidence, notification of findings and an appeals process.

### **What are parent's due process rights?**

Parents who wish to challenge a decision of a review committee must file a written due process hearing request with the LEA. Upon receipt of a parent's appeal, the LEA must schedule a due process hearing before an impartial hearing officer and provide the parents with a written notice of hearing that sets out the date, time, and place for the hearing and advises them of their right to participate and be represented by an attorney.

The employment of a hearing officer is the financial responsibility of the LEA. A hearing officer cannot be an employee of the LEA and cannot be related to any member of the board of education. A hearing officer need not be an attorney, but must be familiar with the requirements of Section 504 and must render a written decision including findings of fact and conclusions of law.

A copy of the written record or tape recording of the hearing must be provided to the parents and an interpreter must be provided for parents whose primary language is other than English or who are hearing impaired.

The decision made by a hearing officer is final, unless the parents or the LEA appeal the decision to state or federal court.

## **Accessibility**

### **What is the LEA's responsibility to make buildings accessible?**

Facilities which are defined by Section 504 as "existing facilities" need not necessarily be made accessible so long as the program or activity, viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to persons with disabilities. It would not be necessary to make every school in a LEA accessible. However, the student must be afforded an equal opportunity to enjoy the full range of services offered by the LEA.

### **What modifications can the LEA make to facilities?**

An LEA can redesign equipment, reassign classes or other services to accessible buildings, assign aides to students, deliver services at alternate accessible sites, or alter existing facilities. An LEA need not undertake structural changes to a building if other methods will result in compliance.

### **What are some examples of unacceptable accommodations?**

Carrying a student up stairs; making one particular building or part of a building accessible and placing all students with mobility impairments at this location; having students who are disabled eat on a separate floor due to an inaccessible cafeteria; or denying access to certain programs such as music, art or assembly because such programs are physically inaccessible by location.

### **What are the LEA's obligations for new buildings, additions, or alterations?**

If the start date for construction is on or after March 15, 2012, all newly constructed or altered state and local government facilities must comply with the 2010 Standards. Before that date, the 1991 Standards (without the elevator exemption), the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), or the 2010 Standards may be used for such projects when the start of construction commences on or after September 15, 2010. If the construction or alternation occurred before September 15, 2010, the facilities must comply with the UFAS or 1991 Standards.

For more information on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, please visit:

[http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards\\_index.htm](http://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm).

### **What does "to the maximum extent feasible" mean?**

This provision covers the occasional instance where the nature of an existing facility is such that it is impractical or prohibitively expensive to renovate it in a manner that results in its being entirely barrier-free. However, in all of these instances, the alteration should provide the maximum amount of physical accessibility that is feasible.

### **Who provides technical assistance for accessibility issues?**

OCR can provide technical assistance to LEAs on fulfilling the accessibility requirements of Section 504.

## **Employment Practices**

The primary purpose of this manual is to address issues regarding student rights. However, since Section 504 also encompasses employment practices, this section on employment practices is included. For further information on requirements of LEAs and their employees, please consult the Personnel Office of the LEA, and/or Chapter 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 104, Subpart B.

### **Who is a “qualified” individual with a disability for employment purposes?**

A qualified individual with disabilities is one, who with reasonable accommodations can perform the essential functions of the job in question.

### **What are the LEA’s responsibilities for hiring persons with disabilities?**

LEAs are required to take positive steps to employ and advance qualified individuals with disabilities. LEAs must make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitation of an otherwise qualified applicant or employee who has a disability unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the LEA’s program.

### **What is considered an undue hardship?**

The regulations list the following factors which should be considered:

1. The overall size of the LEA’s program with respect to the number of employees, number and type of facilities, and size of budget.
2. The type of operation, including the composition and structure of its workforce.
3. The nature and cost of the accommodation needed.

### **What are reasonable accommodations?**

Some examples of reasonable accommodations are:

1. Making facilities readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.
2. Job restructuring, part-time or modified work schedules, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices, the provision of readers or interpreters.

### **When may an LEA refuse to hire an applicant or promote an employee who has a disability?**

The LEA does not need to hire an applicant when the person is not qualified, where reasonable accommodation does not overcome the effects of the person’s disability, or where reasonable accommodation causes undue hardship to the employer.

### **Is the LEA prohibited from asking an applicant about any disabilities?**

Generally, an employer may not conduct a pre-employment medical examination or make pre-employment inquiries as to whether an applicant has a disability. However, the employer may inquire into an applicant's ability to perform job-related functions. For example, an employer may not ask an applicant if the applicant has epilepsy but may ask whether the applicant can perform a particular job without endangering other employees.

### **Are medical examinations prohibited?**

An employer may condition employment on the results of a medical examination only if all applicants, regardless of disability, are also subject to such an examination and the results are kept confidential.

### **What limitations are on an employer regarding testing applicants?**

A test which tends to screen out persons with disabilities may not be used unless the test score is shown to be job related and alternative job related tests which do not screen out persons with disabilities are not available. Tests must also be administered in a manner that reflects actual aptitude or skill rather than the sensory, manual or speaking impairment of the applicant unless the tests purport to test these skills.

### **What is an employer's obligation to hire or retain a person who is addicted to alcohol or drugs?**

An employer may not refuse employment to someone who has been addicted to drugs or alcohol in the past. If an applicant or employee is presently addicted to alcohol, the employer may not refuse or terminate employment unless the employer can show that the alcohol addiction prevents successful performance on the job or presents a direct threat to property or the safety of others. The employer may hold the addicted person to the same standards of performance and behavior as expected of others. The behavioral manifestations of the condition may be taken into account in determining whether s/he is qualified. An employer is not required to retain or hire an individual addicted to drugs who is currently using drugs.

### **Is an employer entitled to administer drug testing to persons known to have been addicted in the past?**

Yes. An employer is not prohibited from requiring an employee to be drug tested who has successfully completed or is presently participating in a supervised drug rehabilitation program.

## Major Differences in IDEA & Section 504

	IDEA	Section 504
<b>General Purpose</b>	A federal funded statute which provides financial aid to states in their efforts to ensure adequate and appropriate services for disabled students.	A broad civil rights law which protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities which receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Dept. of Education.
<b>Eligibility</b>	Lists categories of disabilities.	A person who has or has had a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity or is regarded as disabled by others.
<b>FAPE</b>	“Appropriate” means a program designed to provide an educational benefit.	“Appropriate” means an education comparable to the education provided to nondisabled students.
<b>Special Education vs. General Curriculum</b>	A student is only eligible to receive IDEA services if the IEP team determines that the student has one of the disabling conditions and needs special education and related services.	A student is eligible if s/he has or has had a physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits a major life activity or is regarded as disabled by others. The student is not required to need special education.
<b>Funding</b>	The LEA receives additional funds for eligible students.	Additional funds are not provided.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Not specifically mentioned, although if modifications must be made to provide FAPE, IDEA requires it. Does not extend least restrictive environment to nonacademic services.	Detailed regulations regarding building and program accessibility and comparable facilities. Includes academic settings.
<b>Procedural Safeguards</b>	Requires written notice regarding identification, evaluation, and placement. Notice requirements are specifically spelled out. Prior written notice required before any change in placement.	Written notice not required although it is recommended. Notice required before a significant change in placement.
<b>Evaluations</b>	Consent required prior to an initial evaluation. Reevaluations must be conducted at least every 3 years. Not required before a change in placement.	Notice, consent required prior to initial evaluation. Periodic reevaluations required. Reevaluation required before a significant change in placement.
<b>Grievance Procedures</b>	Not required.	LEAs with 15 or more employees must designate an employee to ensure compliance with Section 504 and provide a grievance procedure for parents, students, and employees.

<b>Due Process Hearings</b>	Requires impartial hearing. Rules are almost identical.	Requires impartial hearing. Rules are almost identical.
<b>Exhaustion</b>	Must pursue administrative hearing before seeking redress in court.	Not required.
<b>Enforcement</b>	Compliance monitored by TDOE. TDOE will resolve complaints.	Enforced by OCR. OCR will investigate complaints.
<b>Employment</b>	No provisions.	Regulates employment of persons with disabilities.
<b>Transition Services</b>	IDEA requires the development of a transition plan within the IEP process beginning at age 14.	No requirement.
<b>Independent Educational Evaluation</b>	Required.	Not required.



# Appendix

## **Section 504 Coordinator Duties and Responsibilities**

- Facilitate the implementation of the LEA Section 504/ADA policy.
- Develop, revise, and ensure compliance in the implementation of consistent Section 504 procedures.
- Advise the director of schools and school board regarding Section 504 compliance issues/ and needs.
- Provide on-going training and support to LEA staff regarding Section 504 and the implementation of the Section 504 procedures.
- Facilitate the provision of reasonable accommodations for LEA employees with disabilities.
- Serve as a resource to LEA administrators, building-level teams and community members regarding Section 504/ADA issues.
- Coordinate Section 504/ADA grievance procedures.
- Serve as the LEA liaison to the Office for Civil Rights. (OCR complaint resolution and corrective action plan implementation).

## Model Notice of Non-discrimination

The following Model notice of non-discrimination meets the minimum requirements of the regulations enforced by OCR:

The (Name of LEA) does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person(s) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Name and/or Title  
Address  
Telephone No.

Inquiries may also be made to the Office for Civil Rights. The address of the regional office, which covers Tennessee, is:

United States Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Atlanta Office, Southern Division  
61 Forsyth St., S.W.  
Suite 19T70  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 974-9406

## Model Annual Notice to Parents

In compliance with state and federal law, the (LEA) will provide to each protected student with a disability without discrimination or cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to provide equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities to the maximum extent appropriate to the student's abilities. In order to qualify as a protected student with a disability, the student must be of school age with a physical or mental disability, which substantially limits or prohibits participation in or access to an aspect of the school program. These services and protections for "protected students who are disabled" are distinct from those applicable to all eligible or exceptional students enrolled (or seeking enrollment) in special education programs.

For further information on the evaluation procedures and provision of services to protected disabled students, contact:

Name and/or Title

Address

Telephone No.

# Model Notice of Procedural Safeguards

## SECTION 504, THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as Section 504, is a federal nondiscrimination statute. The purpose of the Act is to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to nondisabled students.

An eligible student under Section 504 is a student who (a) has, (b) has a record of having, or (c) is regarded as having, a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits a major life activity (such as learning, self-care, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working and performing manual tasks) or a major bodily function (such functions include immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions).

The purpose of this Notice is to delineate the procedural rights assured by Section 504. The enabling regulations for Section 504 at *34 CFR Part 104*, entitle students to the following rights:

1. Your student has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his/her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. *34 CFR § 104.33*.
2. Your student has the right to free educational services except for those fees that are imposed on nondisabled students or their parents. Insurers and similar third parties are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student. *34 CFR § 104.33*.
3. Your student has a right to placement in the least restrictive environment. *34 CFR § 104.34*.
4. Your student has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided to nondisabled students. *34 CFR § 104.34*.
5. Your student has a right to an evaluation prior to an initial Section 504 placement and any subsequent change in placement. *34 CFR § 104.35*.
6. Testing and other evaluation procedures must conform to the requirements of *34 CFR § 104.35* as to validation, administration, areas of evaluation, etc. The LEA shall consider information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social and cultural background, adaptive behavior, physical or medical reports, student grades, progress reports, parent observations, anecdotal reports, and assessment scores. *34 CFR § 104.35*.
7. Placement decisions must be made by a group of persons (i.e., Section 504 Committee), including persons knowledgeable about your student, the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, and the legal requirements for least restrictive environment and comparable facilities. *34 CFR § 104.35*.

8. If eligible under Section 504, your student has a right to periodic reevaluations, generally every three (3) years. *34 CFR § 104.35.*
9. You have the right to notice prior to any action by the LEA in regard to the identification, evaluation, or placement of your student. *34 CFR § 104.36.*
10. You have the right to examine relevant records. *34 CFR § 104.36.*
11. You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the LEA's actions regarding your student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney. *34 CFR § 104.36.*
12. If you wish to challenge the actions of the LEA's Section 504 Committee in regard to your student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, you should file an oral or written request for a due process hearing with the LEA's Section 504 Coordinator. *34 CFR § 104.7.*
13. If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer, you have a right to a review of that decision by a court of competent jurisdiction. *34 CFR § 104.36.*
14. You also have a right to file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights. The address of the regional office with jurisdiction over Tennessee is:  
  
 U.S. Department of Education  
 Office for Civil Rights - Atlanta  
 61 Forsythe Street, SW, Suite 19T70  
 Atlanta, GA 30303  
 (404-974-9406)
15. You may seek reimbursement for attorney fees.

My signature indicates that I have received this Notice of Procedural Safeguards.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
 \_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

## Model Section 504 Parental Rights

Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, disabled students and their parents or guardians are entitled to procedural safeguards with respect to actions taken by the (LEA) regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of students who are identified under this statute. In this regard the following rights are afforded:

1. Notice of any action taken with regard to identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a disabled student;
2. An opportunity to examine relevant records;
3. An impartial hearing with the opportunity for participation by the disabled student's parents/guardians and representation by counsel; and
4. A review procedure.

If you would like further explanation of these rights, please contact (name), Section 504 Coordinator, at (telephone number).

Section 504 Parental Rights were given by (name and title) on (date) for (student's name), (student's date of birth) at (name of school).

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

## Model Section 504 Informational Notice

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is a civil rights statute, which prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The statute defines a person with a disability as anyone who:

- *Has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (major life activities include activities such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing speaking, breathing, learning, and working) or major bodily functions (such functions include immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions);*
- *Has a record of such impairment;*
- *Is regarded as having such impairment.*

In order to fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the (LEA) recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding its personnel and students. No discrimination against any person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs or activities in the (LEA).

The (LEA) has specific responsibilities under Section 504, which include the responsibility to identify, evaluate, and if the student is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to afford access to appropriate educational services.

If the parent/guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the (School System), s/he has a right to a hearing with an impartial hearing officer.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) also specify rights related to educational records. FERPA gives parents/guardians the right to:

- *Inspect and review his/her student's educational records;*
- *Make copies of his/her student's educational records;*
- *Receives a list of all individual(s) having access to his/her student's educational records;*
- *Ask for an explanation of any item in the records;*
- *As for an amendment to any report on the grounds that it is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the student's rights; and*
- *A hearing on the issues if the school refuses to make the amendment.*

If there are any questions, please contact:

---

Section 504 Coordinator

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Telephone



## **Model Policy – Section 504 Complaint/Grievance Procedures**

The LEA acknowledges that it is desirable to resolve employee allegations of discrimination through free and informal communications. A request for an informal conference must be made by the grievant within 10 calendar days after an alleged violation has occurred. A conference must be convened within five calendar days after receipt of the request.

If the informal process fails to satisfy the grievant, a grievance may be processed as follows:

**Step 1:** Within five calendar days following the informal conference, the grievant shall file a grievance on the form provided by the central office. The grievant should present the grievance in orally or in writing to the Section 504 Coordinator. Oral complaints will be reduced to writing. Within 20 calendar days of the receipt of the grievance, the coordinator shall conduct a hearing regarding the complaint. All parties involved in the grievance shall be given a five calendar day notice of the date, time and place of the hearing. The parties shall be granted appropriate due process rights as required by law including the right to be represented by counsel, offer testimony, present evidence, cross examine witnesses, and appeal rulings. Within 15 calendar days of the adjournment of the hearing, the coordinator shall render a written decision regarding the grievance.

**Step 2:** If the grievant is not satisfied at Step 1, the grievant may refer the grievance to the director of schools within 10 calendar days after receipt of the Step 1 answer. The director or his designee shall hold a de novo hearing following the same procedures as in the previous hearing.

**Step 3:** If the grievant is not satisfied at Step 2, the grievant may within 10 days request a Due Process Hearing. This hearing shall follow the same procedures as required in the cases involving parents and students.

**Definitions:** A “grievance” shall mean any claim by an employee that there has been a violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of the terms of Section 504.

**Advanced Step Filing:** Grievances may be initially filed at Step 1 thereby eliminating the informal conference.

**No Reprisals:** No reprisals shall be taken by the Board or its agents against any individual because of participation in this process.

**Withdrawal:** A grievance may be withdrawn at any level without establishing a precedent.

**Time Limitations:** An extension of the time limits is permissible by mutual consent of the parties at any level

## Model Section 504 Complaint/Grievance Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) who discriminated against you/student (Please include the individual's title):

\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a brief description of what happened, when it happened, and who was involved. (Please attach additional pages, if necessary).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Explain what steps, if any, you have already taken to resolve this matter:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe how you would like to see this matter resolved:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print

**\*Please attach any documents or other documents or information you think will help with the investigation of your complaint.**

## Model Section 504 Referral and Recommendations

Referral Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student \_\_\_\_\_  
Last First M.I. DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Referral made by \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Referral \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Provide information to substantiate concern(s) (i.e., pre-referral data, disciplinary information, screening instruments, observations, anecdotal data, reports, achievement/aptitude test (TCAP), examples of student's work):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe interventions already used in attempting to resolve concern(s):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

To be completed by the Section 504 Team

Date of Section 504 Team Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendations

\_\_\_\_\_ Refer for Comprehensive Evaluation under IDEA  
\_\_\_\_\_ Screen/evaluate for Section 504 eligibility  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other, Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Section 504 Team member responsible to inform parent/guardian of recommendations:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name/Position

TDOE

Section 504 Guide

## Model Notice of Action/Consent

To: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_

### I. Notice of Action. The purpose of this written notice is to inform you that we are:

\_\_\_\_\_ proposing **to** \_\_\_\_\_ initiate **a/an**  
\_\_\_\_\_ refusing \_\_\_\_\_ change

Mark all items that apply:

\_\_\_\_\_ evaluation \_\_\_\_\_ Section 504 plan \_\_\_\_\_ disciplinary action  
\_\_\_\_\_ eligibility \_\_\_\_\_ reevaluation \_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of the proposed or refused action:

Reason why we are proposing or refusing to take action is:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of building Section 504 coordinator)

---

### II. Parent Consent (Only required for initial evaluation.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I do consent to an initial evaluation for my student.  
\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not consent for an initial evaluation for my student.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

## Model Notice of Section 504 Committee Meeting

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

The Section 504 Committee will be meeting to discuss referral and evaluation information. If it is determined the student has a disability, the student's educational needs will be discussed and any applicable programs or modifications will be considered.

If you wish to have further information or have any questions please contact:

Section 504 Building Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

## Model Release of Information Form

For the purpose of providing the most appropriate instruction and assistance in school, I do hereby give permission for a mutual exchange of psycho-educational evaluations, psycho-social evaluations, and/or medical evaluations concerning:

<i>Name of Student:</i>	<i>DOB:</i>
<i>School Where Enrolled:</i>	<i>Grade:</i>
<i>Between the (School/School System) and</i>  (Hospital, Clinic, Institution, Association, or School) (Address, include City, State, Zip)	
<i>Name of Contact Person:</i>	<i>Phone:</i>
<i>Name of Person Giving Consent (Print):</i>	
<i>Relationship:</i>	
<i>Signature:</i>	<i>Date:</i>

Release all information

Release the checked information

- 1. General identifying (name, address, birth date, grade level completed, grades, class standing, attendance record)
- 2. Standardized Achievement and Aptitude Test Scores
- 3. Personality and Interest Scores
- 4. Teacher ratings
- 5. Record of extracurricular activities
- 6. Individualized education programs
- 7. Psychological reports
- 8. Medical reports
- 9. Psychiatric reports
- 10. Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to:  Parent/guardian  
 School Section 504 file  
 LEA Section 504 coordinator

## Model Letter to Physician Regarding Medical Concerns

(Date)

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_:

A referral has been initiated for \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name), \_\_\_\_\_ (date of birth) of \_\_\_\_\_ (address) under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The reason(s) for the referral is/are:

[Type reason(s) here]

Since the questions presented are relative to medical concerns and it appears these concerns are affecting a "major life activity" or "major bodily function" we would appreciate your input. Please complete the attached questionnaire. A release of information has been signed by the parent/guardian and is attached for your convenience.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

(Name and Title)

Cc: Parent



## Model Physician Questionnaire for Medical Concerns

Student \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

1. Detail available medical background, including a written diagnostic statement and copies of any/all reports.
  
2. In your opinion, how do these difficulties “substantially limit” this student’s ability to receive and/or benefit from the education program/activity?
  
3. Recommendations for consideration at an upcoming conference.

Please attach any reports pertinent to the medical/educational needs of this student.

Please forward a copy to \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you.

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

## **Model Parent/Student Rights in Identification, Evaluation, and Placement**

The following is a description of the rights granted to students with a disability by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights statute, which prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. The intent of the law is to keep you fully informed concerning decisions about your student and to inform you of your rights if you disagree with any of these decisions.

You have the right to:

1. Have the student take part in, and receive benefits from public education programs without discrimination because of his/her disability;
2. Have your LEA advise you of your rights under federal law;
3. Receive notice with respect to identification, evaluation, or placement of the student;
4. Have the student receive a free appropriate public education. This includes the right to be educated with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate. It also includes the right to have the school LEA make reasonable accommodations to allow your student an equal opportunity to participate in school and school-related activities;
5. Have the student educated in facilities and receive services comparable to those provided non-disabled students;
6. Have the student receive special education and related services if s/he is found to be eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act;
7. Have evaluation, education, and placement decisions made based upon a variety of information sources, and by persons who know the student, the evaluation data, and placement options;
8. Have the student afforded an equal opportunity to participate in nonacademic and extracurricular activities offered by the LEA;
9. Examine all relevant records relating to decisions regarding the student's identification, evaluation, education program, and placement;
10. Obtain copies of education records at a reasonable cost, unless the fee would effectively deny you access to the records;
11. A response from the school LEA to reasonable requests for explanations and interpretations of the student's records;

12. Request the amendment of the student’s educational records if there is reasonable cause to believe that they are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of your student. If the LEA refuses this request for amendment, it shall notify you within a reasonable time, and advise you of the right to a hearing on the matter of a record amendment;
13. File a local grievance;
14. Request an impartial due process hearing related to decisions or action regarding the student’s identification, evaluation, educational program or placement. You and the student may take part in the hearing and have an attorney represent you. Written hearing requests must be submitted to the 504 Coordinator/designee of the LEA. The hearing must be held no less than 15 days from the date a hearing officer is appointed or later if the hearing officer grants a continuance.

Reasons for the due process hearing request:

- a) Denied identification, evaluation or educational placement;
  - b) Placed in a setting which is not the least restrictive environment;
  - c) Denied appropriate services due to inaccessibility of programs;
  - d) Denied modifications to regular education program because of identified disability; or,
  - e) Denied participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities because of disability.
15. Request payment of reasonable attorney fees. Awards of attorney fees are discretionary in Section 504 hearings.

The person in (LEA) who is responsible for ensuring compliance with Section 504 is:

LEA Section 504 Coordinator  
Telephone Number

# Model Receipt of Notice of Procedural Safeguards and Rights

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

This is to verify that I have received copies of the Section 504 *Notice of Procedural Safeguards and Parent and Student Rights in Identification, Evaluation, and Placement*, which inform me of my rights throughout the educational process. The rights have been explained to me by:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name

Position

on \_\_\_\_\_.

Date

I understand that my rights include the right to receive:

- (1) This and all other written notices in the language that I understand (primary language or, if needed, a translation of such orally, in sign language, or Braille, as appropriate, and
- (2) Answers from school personnel to additional questions.

My signature below indicates that I received a copy of the Section 504 *Parent and Student Rights in Identification, Evaluation, and Placement* and understand its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

# Model Annual Review Notice

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Your student has been receiving services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Section 504 Review Committee will convene to consider current data as they reevaluate the educational services your student is now receiving. In order to continue to receive 504 services, you will need to provide the following current documentation:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The meeting will be held:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Building Section 504 Coordinator at the number listed below.

Sincerely,

Section 504 Building Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator



**Classroom Schedule** (List all classes/teachers)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Eligibility**

Student is eligible under Section 504? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

- If yes, recommended accommodations/services:

- If no, Team recommendations:

Additional comments:

Person responsible for implementation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 504 Team**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Section 504 Parental Rights were given and explained to parent(s)/guardian(s):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

**Reevaluation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Comprehensive reevaluations must be conducted at least every three (3) years after the initial assessment\*\***

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
              \_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
              \_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator



# Model Student Service and Accommodation Plan

Date Plan Developed: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Disability (as identified by the Section 504 Committee): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I. Accommodations necessary for the student to access educational programs and activities:

<b>A. Academics</b>	
<b>Need</b> (as determined through evaluation information)	<b>Accommodation</b> (necessary to meet need)

<b>B. Non-Academics/Extracurricular</b>	
<b>Need</b> (as determined through evaluation information)	<b>Accommodation</b> (necessary to meet need)

- II. Health Plan *(School Nurse must participate in writing this section. Student's physician should also be consulted)*

Summary of medical needs and current medications	
Action	Person Responsible

- III. Evacuation Plan *(Student's physician should be consulted. Nurse(s)/physical therapist may need to participate)*

Action	Person Responsible

Person responsible for disseminating this plan to appropriate staff:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Name/Position)

Next Review date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
 \_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
 \_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

# Model Alternative Learning Plan

Section 504  
Reasonable Modifications for

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(Student's Name)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mark the student's correct and acceptable work, not his/her mistakes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Examinations and quizzes should be given orally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reading assignments should be presented on audio medium.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Make arrangements for homework assignments to reach home with clear, concise directions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reversals and transpositions of letters and numbers should not be marked wrong. Instead, reversals or transpositions should be pointed out for correction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Recognize and give credit for student's oral participation in class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provide extra test time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student should be allowed to record classroom lectures or discussions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student should be allowed to copy another student's class notes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student should be provided a copy of another student's class notes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Utilization of peer tutoring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Utilization of cross-age tutoring.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Avoid placing student under pressure of time or competition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Accept homework papers typed by the student or dictated by him and recorded by someone else, if need be.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do not return handwritten work to be copied over, paper is often not improved and student's frustration is added to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quietly repeat instructions to student after they have been given to the class; then have student repeat and explain directions to you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Let the student dictate themes or answers to questions on audio medium.

\_\_\_\_\_ Accompany oral directions with written directions for student to refer to (on blackboard or paper)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not require lengthy outside reading assignments.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student should be permitted to use cursive writing.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other:

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Comments:

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Person responsible for disseminating this plan to appropriate staff:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name/Position)

Next Review date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

# Model Student Behavior Plan

Date Plan Developed: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

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Disability (as identified by the Section 504 Committee): \_\_\_\_\_

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A. Behavior(s) to be addressed:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Cause(s)/Trigger(s) for behavior(s) in school setting:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Change(s) in school environment necessary to lessen behavior(s):

	Change	Responsible Person(s)
Behavior 1.		
Behavior 2.		
Behavior 3.		

D. Step(s) to be followed by school staff to respond to behaviors:

	<b>Steps</b>	<b>Responsible Person(s)</b>
Behavior 1.		
Behavior 2.		
Behavior 3.		

Person responsible for disseminating this plan to appropriate staff:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name/Position)

Next Review date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/guardian)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Copies to: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/guardian  
\_\_\_\_\_ School Section 504 file  
\_\_\_\_\_ LEA Section 504 coordinator

# Model Due Process Hearing Procedures

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides parents with the right to an impartial due process hearing to contest any action of the LEA with regard to a student's identification, evaluation or placement. *34 CFR §104.36*. The parent has the right to personally participate and to be represented by at the hearing by an attorney at the parent's expense.

## **Request for Due Process**

A parent who wishes to challenge the LEA's action or omission with regard to the identification, evaluation or placement of a student who has or is believed to have a disability, shall make an oral or written request for a due process hearing to the LEA's Section 504 coordinator. If a request is received orally, it should be reduced to writing or the parent/guardian should be provided a form for such purpose. The written request must clearly state that the parent is seeking a Section 504 due process hearing. The LEA cannot refuse a parent's due process hearing request. The LEA cannot unilaterally determine whether a due process hearing is warranted, as such decisions are reserved to the impartial hearing officer.

## **Hearing Officer**

The LEA will appoint an impartial hearing officer to preside over the hearing and issue a decision. Such appointment will be made within 15 calendar days of the date of receipt of a request for a due process hearing. The hearing officer will be hired by the LEA as an independent contractor at no expense to the parent. The hearing officer cannot be a current employee of the LEA, and cannot be related to any member of the LEA's board of education. The hearing officer need not be an attorney, but must be familiar with the requirements of Section 504 and the LEA's hearing procedures. The LEA's choice of an impartial hearing officer is final and may not be presented as an issue at the due process hearing, since such an issue would not relate to the identification, evaluation, or placement of a student. If a parent disputes the impartiality of the hearing officer, the parent may raise such issue in a review of the hearing officer's written opinion by a court of competent jurisdiction or in a complaint to the Office for Civil Rights. The regional office which covers Tennessee is: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights – Atlanta, 61 Forsythe Street, SW, Suite 19T70, Atlanta, GA 30303, (404) 974-9406.

## **Scheduling of Hearing**

The appointed hearing officer must issue a written order setting hearing date. The date for the hearing must be within 15 calendar days of the date of the hearing officer's appointment. The order must set a mutually agreeable time and place for the hearing.

## **Continuances**

Upon a showing of good cause the hearing officer may grant a continuance of the hearing date and set a new hearing date.

## **Legal Representation at Hearing**

The LEA and parent may be represented by an attorney at each party's expense.

## **Pre-Hearing Conference**

The hearing officer may order a pre-hearing conference during which the parent or the parent's attorney will state and clarify the issues to be addressed at the hearing. The pre-hearing conference will also serve to resolve preliminary matters, clarify jurisdictional issues, and answer the parties' questions regarding the hearing process. The pre-hearing conference can be held via telephone.

## **Dismissals**

If, following the pre-hearing conference, the hearing officer determines that the parent, as a matter of law, alleges no claims or issues within the jurisdiction of Section 504, the hearing officer may dismiss the hearing request and issue an order to that effect explaining the basis for such finding.

## **Hearing**

The hearing should be conducted in an informal manner. The hearing should be closed or open to the public at the parent's request. The hearing officer may reasonably limit testimony and introduction of documentary exhibits.

### **Recording**

The due process hearing may be audio or video tape-recorded. The parent may obtain a copy of the tape-recording. The parties and witnesses should introduce themselves at the beginning of their presentations. If a parent or LEA appeals the due process hearing decision to a court of competent jurisdiction, the LEA will prepare a written transcript of the hearing for the court at no expense to the parent.

### **Format of Presentation**

Each side will have an equal amount of time to present their positions to the hearing officer, who will make the determination as to time constraints based upon the issues involved. The parent will present its case first. The LEA will present its case next. All of the preceding may be done either personally or through an attorney. At the conclusion of the LEA's case, the parent may offer a brief rebuttal.

### **Submission of Documentary Exhibits**

The parties may submit any reports, evaluations, correspondence, notes, or any other documents that may support their positions and that the hearing officer will admit at his /her discretion. Exhibits submitted to the hearing officer by either party must be marked. The hearing officer may, in the exercise of discretion, reasonably limit the number of documents to be submitted for review, as well as the number of witnesses and the length and/or scope of their presentations or statements.



### Closing Argument/Briefs

The hearing officer may allow or request written briefs summarizing and characterizing the information presented at the hearing including legal authority in support of each party's position. The hearing officer will set time lines for the submission of briefs at the conclusion of the hearing.

### **Decision**

The hearing officer may make an oral ruling at the conclusion of the hearing or take the case under advisement, but, in all cases, the hearing officer shall issue a written opinion addressing and ruling on all issues raised by the parties, indicating what corrective action, if any, the LEA must take. Formal findings of fact and conclusions of law are required. Any issue or claim raised by the parent that is left unaddressed by the hearing officer will be deemed to have been denied. The written decision must be issued within 45 calendar days of the date the request for a due process hearing is received by the LEA. The hearing officer may award attorneys' fees to the prevailing party.

### **Review Procedure/Appeal**

Parties not satisfied by the decision of the hearing officer may appeal the decision to state or federal court.

### **Complaints to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR)**

A parent may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) if the parent alleges that the LEA violated any provision or regulation of Section 504. The filing of a complaint does not affect the hearing process or the time lines set forth above. OCR addresses Section 504 complaints separately and independently of the local hearing process, in accordance with the guidelines set forth in OCRs Case Processing Manual. A parent should contact OCR or consult its Case Processing Manual concerning timeframes for filing OCR complaints.

The OCR office for Tennessee is:

Atlanta Office  
Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
61 Forsyth St. S.W., Suite 19T10  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8927

Telephone: 404-974-9406  
FAX: 404-974-9471; TDD: 877-521-2172  
Email: [OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov)

The OCR National Headquarters is:

U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education  
Bldg  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Telephone: 800-421-3481  
FAX: 202-453-6012; TDD: 877-521-2172  
Email: [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:OCR@ed.gov)

## Model Request for Section 504 Due Process Hearing

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

I am requesting that a Section 504 Due Process Hearing be scheduled regarding the following issues:

Section 504 identification: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Section 504 evaluation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Section 504 placement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian/Authorized Representative Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Return this form by FAX or MAIL to:

Name and/or Title

Address

Telephone No