

# 504 Coordinator Fact Sheet



## What does Section 504 mean?

- Section 504 is federal civil rights law under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It provides **protection against discrimination** for individuals with disabilities. Students in school settings fall under the civil rights protection of Section 504 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability from all school programs and activities in both public and private schools receiving direct or indirect federal funding. Section 504 is designed to provide equal access and fairness in general education to students with disabilities.

## Who serves as the school's 504 Coordinator?

- Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, each school district with 15 or more employees that receives federal financial assistance must designate **at least one school employee** to coordinate the district's compliance with its responsibilities under Section 504.
- This role is usually assigned to someone in special education or an administrator, but it could be assigned to another staff member as well.
- The school should appoint someone sufficiently knowledgeable about the requirements under state and federal disability discrimination laws, regulations, and guidance, including Section 504 and the American with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA).

## What are the responsibilities of a 504 Coordinator?

- The 504 Coordinator is responsible for **preventing discrimination** against students, employees, and others based on a disability and ensuring **compliance with all procedures and procedural safeguards** required under Section 504/ADA.
- The 504 Coordinator will advise the district about the development and implementation of 504 Plans, as well as about policies, procedures, and practices and to investigate complaints alleging violations of Section 504 and ADAAA, discrimination based on disability, and disability harassment.
- The 504 Coordinator also:
  - Coordinates Section 504 processes and training
  - Provides parents or guardians with procedural safeguards
  - Manages Section 504 grievance procedures

## Is it necessary for School Food Service to work with the 504 Coordinator?

- Any time there is a request for a meal accommodation for a student, it is important to work with a team at the school, which should include the 504 Coordinator. If a 504 Plan is created, the 504 Coordinator will need to establish a meeting with the family to finalize the plan. The Food Service Department should be present during any meeting where the discussion of student meal accommodations is involved.

## Who is on the "504 Team"? Is it the same as the team managing meal accommodations?

- **Not necessarily.** The 504 Team usually includes the 504 Coordinator, teacher(s), principal, and possibly the school nurse or other specialist relevant to the case. Many 504 Plans do not involve eating or food, so there would be no need for the Food Service Department to always be a part of this team. However, when an accommodation request relates to meal accommodations, then a representative from Food Services must be involved. It is recommended that the team work together when managing meal accommodations and so this group would include the 504 Coordinator, the school nurse, Food Service Department and others as appropriate.

## How does the 504 process work?

- If the school has reason to suspect that the disability requires accommodations in the general educational environment (in order to have equally effective participation in the school program), then the school must notify the parent of the need for an individual evaluation and evaluate the student.

- If the student then qualifies for a Section 504 Plan, a plan is developed and implemented.
- The process will resemble the following steps:

