

## IEP vs. 504 Plans: A High-Level Overview

	<b>IEP</b>	<b>504</b>
<b>Qualification/ Definition of Need</b>	Child meets one of the definitions of disability and, because of that disability needs special education and related services	Child has a disability which substantially limits one or more major life activity, has a record of such disability, or is regarded as having such a disability  Learning is listed as a “major life activity”
<b>Identification/ Initiation Process</b>	Can be initiated by parent <sup>1</sup> or school upon determination that child requires additional services  Triggers a comprehensive evaluation process with varied assessments depending on need and culminates in IEP Team meeting to determine whether the child requires special education	Most frequently initiated by parent request  Plan creation process (e.g., participants, documents required, etc.) typically mandated by state or local authorities  Documentation and evaluations used to determine services
<b>Services/ Supports Available</b>	Specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability and designed to offer a “free and appropriate public education” (FAPE)  Includes related services, transportation, extended school year, assistive technology, testing and other accommodations and more  Set forth on an Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Similar to IEP in that a “free and appropriate public education” is required  Reasonable accommodations must be offered  Delivery of IEP qualifies as compliance with 504 - therefore, 504 usually only applicable if the student needs accommodations but does not qualify for an IEP  Set forth on a 504 Plan
<b>Timeline for Review</b>	Required to be reviewed at least annually - can be examined and adjusted more frequently  Mandated re-evaluation (a closer look and determination if new assessments are needed) required every three years	No requirements for annual review  Re-evaluation timelines determined by jurisdiction - every three years is a permissible timeline
<b>Complaint Opportunities</b>	Comprehensive complaint procedures for families, including formal administrative hearing process  Applies to both procedural and substantive implementation (e.g., if school violates the process required or does not deliver the appropriate services)	Each jurisdiction must establish complaint procedures, including notice, opportunity to review documents, and hearings  Frequently look similar to the complaint processes for IDEA

<sup>1</sup> Under IDEA, a parent is defined specifically and can refer to a legal guardian or other person with the right to make educational decisions for the child.