



When is it not appropriate to offer a Section 504 accommodation plan?

Eligibility under Section 504 is always decided by evaluating and determining that all three criteria are met. The student must have a mental or physical impairment. That mental or physical impairment must be substantially limiting. The impairment must substantially limit one or more major life activities. If any of the three criteria are not met, the 504 Team should not create a 504 Plan for the student.

Keep in mind that while a 504 Plan might not be appropriate, an informal intervention plan may be appropriate. In the event that the 504 Team determines that the student is not eligible to receive a 504 Plan, the 504 Coordinator is responsible for notifying the parent by completing and mailing the Parent Notice: Section 504 Eligibility or Non-Eligibility Determination form. For additional information, the 504 Team may want to also consult the "Pre-Referral Intervention Manual" (PRIM), published by Hawthorne Educational Services, Inc., found in the school administrator's office.

Here are some of the common misuses of the 504 evaluation process:

- ▶ A parent and/or doctor presents the school with a disability diagnosis and a 504 Plan is written without first determining if the disability causes substantial limitation of a major life activity.
- ▶ A student is placed on a 504 Plan solely to receive a specific accommodation in order to achieve higher grades or test scores on standardized tests, such as the SAT.
- ▶ A student fails to qualify for special education services under IDEA and a 504 Plan is automatically written without first qualifying him or her based on Section 504 criteria.