

# ACCOMMODATIONS & MODIFICATIONS

## What Do They Mean?

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 plan, you'll likely hear the words *accommodation* and *modification*. While the two words sound similar, **they mean different things.**

### ac-com-mo-da-tion (noun)

Accommodations are ways and materials used to make learning easier and help children share what they know. The student is still expected to know the same material and answer the same questions as fully as the other students.

*synonyms:* arrangement, understanding, compromise

### Accommodation:

*Changing  
**HOW**  
they are learning*

### Modification:

*Changing  
**WHAT**  
they are learning*

### mod-i-fi-ca-tion (noun)

Modifications are changes made to the curriculum content, when the expectations are beyond the student's ability.

*synonyms:* alter, adapt, change, adjust, rework, redesign

### Accommodations

Do not fundamentally alter or lower expectations or standards in instructional level, content, or performance criteria
Provide equal access to learning and equal opportunity to demonstrate what is learned
Grading and credit are the same as typical students

### Modifications

Do fundamentally alter or lower expectations or standards in instructional level, content, or performance criteria
Provide student meaningful and productive learning experiences based on individual needs and abilities
Grading and credit are different

# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

It's important to understand the differences in IEP and 504 Plans as they determine how *accommodations* and *modifications* are carried out.

## Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is a program developed to ensure that a child who has an identified disability receive modifications in their daily instruction and related services.



## 504 Plan

The 504 Plan is developed to provide equal access to education through accommodations to the learning environment for children with disabilities or special healthcare needs.

Based on a federal education law known as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which guarantees free and appropriate public education for all students regardless of abilities.

### LAW

Based on a federal civil rights law that provides equal rights for individuals with disabilities throughout their lives to prevent discrimination.

The child must have at least one of the 13 specific disabilities identified by IDEA.

### ELIGIBILITY

The child has a documented disability that substantially limits learning or other major life activity. A list of disabilities is not identified. A child found ineligible for an IEP *may* be considered for a 504 Plan.

The child's academic performance or ability to learn from the general education curriculum is impacted by the disability.

The disability interferes with the child's ability to learn in general education class, and impacts major life activities.

A written plan is required. It's a legally binding document that sets learning goals and describes services the school must provide without delay or interruption. It must be updated annually.

### THE PLAN

The plan outlines the impact of the individual's disability and the accommodations needed. Updates are conducted periodically, typically annually.

Funded by federal, state, and local resources.

### FUNDING & ACCOUNTABILITY

No funds are attached to this statute.

Enforced by the U.S. Department of Education.

Enforced by U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights.

Anyone, including parents, may refer a child for an evaluation.

### SIMILARITIES

Plans are provided at no cost to parents.

Parents can request a meeting to discuss changes to a plan at any time.

## COLLEGE BOUND?

### What to Expect

As a student considers Post Secondary Education, there are some changes regarding services to be aware of

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*When schools and families work together,  
student learning and outcomes improve.*

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# PARENT TIPS

- ◆ Parents should be involved throughout the process.
- ◆ Know the difference between a 504 and an IEP.
- ◆ Remember that you play a crucial role on your child’s team and can contribute to writing goals and monitoring progress. YOU are the expert of your child!
- ◆ Plan to attend all meetings and keep the lines of communication open.
- ◆ Remember that a medical diagnosis alone does not qualify your child for services.
- ◆ You have the right to ask and review evaluation results, draft IEP goals, 504 Plan, and more BEFORE meetings are held.
- ◆ As accommodations and modifications are discussed, keep in mind and ask questions about the long term impact these may have on your child’s future goals.
- ◆ Regardless if your child is on an IEP or a 504 plan, all team members working with your child should be at the table when meetings are held, which should be at least annually.
- ◆ Document communication, concerns and things that are, and aren’t, working well.
- ◆ Data collected is to be objective. Decisions are not to be made based on assumptions or speculations.
- ◆ You can call for a meeting at any time there is a concern, new diagnosis or a need for a change in the plan.
- ◆ The extent of the school’s responsibility should be clearly explained.
- ◆ It is important that you keep all of your child’s educational records.
- ◆ If you do not understand something, ask for further explanation.
- ◆ Focus on how this will support your child.
- ◆ Show appreciation for the efforts of others.
- ◆ Remember, you are not alone!

- ◆ As you inquire about college, take time to meet with the Disability Coordinator to discuss the student’s support needs and how those will be implemented in their courses of study.
- ◆ Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability services.
- ◆ Modifications are not implemented in the college setting. Students can ask for accommodations.



# Who To Talk To If You Have More Questions



It is always important to do your research before approaching your local school district or multi-district special services cooperative regarding your student's support needs.

## South Dakota Parent Connection

800-640-4553

[www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org)

### Resources

- ◆ What Parents Should Know About Special Education in South Dakota
- ◆ Dare to Dialogue
- ◆ Parent Brief– What Parents Should Know About Supporting Students Through 504 and Health Plans

## SD Department of Education

605-773-3678

<https://doe.sd.gov/sped/>

### Resources

- ◆ Section 504 Resources
- ◆ Individual Education Program

## South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center (SD SFEC)

605-484-3401

<https://sdsfec.org/>

## Disability Rights South Dakota

800-658-4782

<https://drsdlaw.org/>

## Understood

<https://www.understood.org/>

### Resources

- ◆ The Different Between Accommodations and Modifications
- ◆ The Difference Between IEPs and 504 Plans

