

INSTRUCTION

Identification and Education Under Section 504

The County Superintendent (Superintendent) designates the following position as the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE) 504 Coordinator to implement the requirements of Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973: (34 CFR 104.7)

Executive Director, Special Services
6767 Green Valley Road
530.622.7130

Definitions

For the purpose of implementing Section 504, the following terms and phrases shall have only the meanings specified below:

Free appropriate public education (FAPE) means the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the individual educational needs of a student with disabilities as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met, at no cost to the student or his/her parent/guardian except when a fee is specifically authorized by law for all students.

Student with a disability means a student who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Physical impairment means any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more body systems, such as neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, immune, hemic, lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

Mental impairment means any mental or psychological disorder, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disability.

Substantially limits major life activities means limiting a person's ability to perform functions, as compared to most people in the general population, such as caring for himself/herself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, writing, communicating, and working. Major life activities also include major bodily functions such as functions of the immune system, special sense organs and skin, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, cardiovascular, endocrine, hemic, lymphatic, musculoskeletal, and reproductive function. Substantially limits shall be determined without regard to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures other than ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses. Mitigating measures are measures that an individual may use to eliminate or reduce the effects of an impairment, including, but not limited to, medications, medical supplies or equipment, prosthetic devices, assistive devices, reasonable modifications or auxiliary aids or services, learned behavioral or adaptive neurological modifications, psychotherapy, behavioral therapy, or physical therapy. (42 USC 12102; 28 CFR 35.108)

Referral, Identification, and Evaluation

Any action or decision to be taken by EDCOE involving the referral, identification, or evaluation of a student with disabilities shall be in accordance with the following procedures:

1. A parent/guardian, teacher, other school employee, student success team, or community agency may refer a student to the principal or 504 Coordinator for identification as a student with a disability under Section 504.
2. Upon receipt of any such referral, the principal, 504 Coordinator, or other qualified individual with expertise in the area of the student's suspected disability shall consider the referral and determine whether an evaluation is appropriate. This determination shall be based on a review of the student's school records, including those in academic and nonacademic areas of the school program; consultation with the student's teacher(s), other professionals, and the parent/guardian, as appropriate; and analysis of the student's needs.

If it is determined that an evaluation is unnecessary, the principal or 504 Coordinator shall inform the parents/guardians in writing of this decision and of the procedural safeguards available, as described in the "Procedural Safeguards" section below.

3. If the student needs or is believed to need special education or related services under Section 504, EDCOE shall conduct an evaluation of the student prior to his/her initial placement. Prior to conducting an initial evaluation of a student for eligibility under Section 504, EDCOE shall obtain written parent/guardian consent.

EDCOE's evaluation procedures shall ensure that the tests and other evaluation materials:

- a. Have been validated and are administered by trained personnel in conformance with the instruction provided by the test publishers
- b. Are tailored to assess specific areas of educational need and are not merely designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient
- c. Reflect the student's aptitude or achievement or whatever else the tests purport to measure rather than his/her impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills, except where those skills are the factors that the tests purport to measure.

Section 504 Services Plan and Placement

Services and placement decisions for students with disabilities shall be determined as follows:

1. A multidisciplinary 504 team shall be convened to review the evaluation data in order to make placement decisions.

The 504 team shall consist of a group of persons knowledgeable about the student, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options.

In interpreting evaluation data and making placement decisions, the team shall draw upon information from a variety of sources, including aptitude and achievement tests, teacher recommendations, physical condition, social or cultural background, and adaptive behavior. The team shall also ensure that information obtained from all such sources is documented and carefully considered and that the placement decision is made in conformity with 34 CFR 104.34.

2. If, upon evaluation, a student is determined to be eligible for services under Section 504, the team shall meet to develop a written 504 services plan which shall specify the types of regular or special education services, accommodations, and supplementary aids and services necessary to ensure that the student receives FAPE.

The parents/guardians shall be invited to participate in the meeting and shall be given an opportunity to examine all relevant records.

3. If the 504 team determines that no services are necessary for the student, the record of the team's meeting shall reflect whether or not the student has been identified as a person with a disability under Section 504 and shall state the basis for the determination that no special services are presently needed. The student's parent/guardian shall be informed in writing of his/her rights and procedural safeguards, as described in the "Procedural Safeguards" section below.

4. The student shall be placed in the regular educational environment, unless EDCOE can demonstrate that the education of the student in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The student shall be educated with those who are not disabled to the maximum extent appropriate to his/her individual needs.

5. EDCOE shall complete the identification, evaluation, and placement process within a reasonable time frame. The district shall adhere to this time frame regardless of any extended school breaks or times that school is otherwise not in session.

6. A copy of the student's Section 504 services plan shall be kept in his/her student record. The student's teacher(s) and any other staff who provide services to the student shall be informed of the plan's requirements.

If a student transfers to another school within the County, the site administrator or designee at the school from which the student is transferring shall ensure that the site administrator or designee at the new school receives a copy of the plan prior to the student's enrollment in the new school.

Review and Reevaluation

The 504 team shall monitor the progress of the student and, at least annually, shall review the effectiveness of the student's Section 504 services plan to determine whether the services are appropriate and necessary and whether the student's needs are being met as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met. In addition, each student with a disability under Section 504 shall be reevaluated at least once every three years.

A reevaluation of the student's needs shall be conducted before any subsequent significant change in placement.

Procedural Safeguards

The Superintendent or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of students with disabilities of all actions and decisions by EDCOE regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of their children. He/she also shall notify the parents/guardians of all the procedural safeguards available to them if they disagree with the EDCOE's action or decision, including an opportunity to examine all relevant records and an impartial hearing in which they shall have the right to participate.

If a parent/guardian disagrees with any EDCOE action or decision regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of his/her child under Section 504, he/she may request a Section 504 due process hearing within 30 days of that action or decision.

Prior to requesting a Section 504 due process hearing, the parent/guardian may, at his/her discretion, but within 30 days of EDCOE's action or decision, request an administrative review of the action or decision. The Coordinator shall designate an appropriate administrator to meet with the parent/guardian to attempt to resolve the issue and the administrative review shall be held within 14 days of receiving the parent/guardian's request. If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the resolution of the issue, he/she may request a Section 504 due process hearing.

A Section 504 due process hearing shall be conducted in accordance with the following procedures:

1. The parent/guardian shall submit a written request to the Coordinator within 30 days of receiving EDCOE's decision or, if an administrative review is held, within 14 days of the completion of the review. The request for the due process hearing shall include:
 - a. The specific nature of the decision with which he/she disagrees
 - b. The specific relief he/she seeks
 - c. Any other information he/she believes is pertinent to resolving the disagreement
2. Within 30 days of receiving the parent/guardian's request, the Superintendent or designee and 504 Coordinator shall select an impartial hearing officer. This 30-day deadline may be extended for good cause or by mutual agreement of the parties.
3. Within 45 days of the selection of the hearing officer, the Section 504 due process hearing shall be conducted and a written decision mailed to all parties. This 45-day deadline may be extended for good cause or by mutual agreement of the parties.
4. The parties to the hearing shall be afforded the right to:
 - a. Be accompanied and advised by legal counsel and by individuals with special knowledge or training related to the problems of students with disabilities under Section 504
 - b. Present written and oral evidence
 - c. Question and cross-examine witnesses
 - d. Receive written findings by the hearing officer stating the decision and explaining the reasons for the decision.

If desired, either party may seek a review of the hearing officer's decision by a federal court of competent jurisdiction.

Notifications

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that EDCOE has taken appropriate steps to notify students and parents/guardians of the district's duty under Section 504.