

Section 504

COMPLIANCE ADVISOR

ROUTE TO	

Your Guide to Understanding and Administering Section 504

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BEST PRACTICE

Learn to transition 504 plans from elementary to middle school

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It's not uncommon for parents of students with Section 504 plans to become anxious or fearful as their child transitions from elementary to middle school.

Contributor



Column

Parents may worry about how the new environment will impact their child's needs. For instance, consider how these middle school characteristics could trigger anxiety for parents of children with disabilities:

- Multiple teachers, rather than only one teacher, are responsible for implementing a student's plan.
- Restrooms are no longer in the classroom, but in different parts of the building.
- School starts and ends at a different time.
- Lunch times change and some students may not be able to sit with their friends from elementary school.
- Concerns abound about bullying or harassment.
- Bus transportation may be necessary.
- Frequent class changes occur with different students in the hallway.

At times, when a child moves to the next school level, a parent will request accommodations based on "what if" situations. Remember that accommodations should be based on actual need.

One way to assure a parent that his child's needs will be met is to schedule a matriculation meeting at the elementary school to review the student's 504 plan with the parent and the 504 designee at the middle school.

Follow these steps:

Schedule meeting in late spring. Invite designated 504 personnel from the middle school and the parent to a team meeting in May to review the current 504 plan. Provide the parent with a notice of procedural

safeguards. At the meeting, review the current 504 plan and modify accommodations if necessary to ensure they are appropriate for the next level.

Fill out "transfer form" to keep track of plans sent to middle school. At the end of the elementary school year, send the student's 504 folder with his plan to the 504 designee at the middle school. Create a "transfer form" to keep track of the 504 folders that are sent to middle schools if forms are not electronic.

Attach cover letter to introduce new staff to accommodations. Before the first day of school, the middle school 504 designee should disseminate the student's 504 plan to all applicable staff members such as the student's teachers, campus-based before- or afterschool providers, bus drivers, nurses or trained medical personnel, cafeteria manager, coaches, and extracurricular activity advisors. Attach a cover letter to the student's 504 plan to introduce the student to the staff member and describe the purpose of the student's accommodation plan.

Remind staff not to alter accommodations without team. Remind staffers that although they might not have participated in the creation of the 504 plan, it must be implemented as written. They cannot alter, modify, or refuse to provide the accommodations in the plan. However, the 504 accommodation plan developed at the end of the year at the elementary school can be modified by the 504 team at the middle school any time to reflect the student's current needs in the new setting.

Ensure proper academic placement. Now, 504 and Title II require that qualified students with disabilities be given the same opportunities to compete for and benefit from accelerated programs as students without disabilities. Some staff members in advanced or accelerated programs may not wish to provide the 504 accommodations as written. Monitor that students are being provided their accommodations. Students must

be provided all appropriate accommodations necessary regardless of the type of academic placement.

☐ **Include nonacademic services, extracurricular activities.** Middle school is a time for students to have more before- and afterschool activity choices available to them. A student with a disability under 504 should have the same opportunity to participate in these nonacademic services and extracurricular activities as any other student. Take these steps to ensure compliance:

- ✓ Provide equal opportunity for 504 students to participate in a before- and aftercare program at the school.
- ✓ Don't charge a higher fee to provide accommodations for a child in a before- or aftercare program at school.
- ✓ Don't exclude a child on the basis of disability from participating in extracurricular activities.

✓ Consider individualized accommodations in the areas of sports, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.

☐ **Open communication lines among elementary, middle school 504 staffers.** A smooth and seamless transition is possible when school personnel from both schools work together to transition the student's 504 plan from elementary to middle school.

Resource: Section 504 Compliance: The Complete K-12 Handbook *is available at* www.shoplrp.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=300660. ■

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