



Education Plans - 504, IEP, or BIP: Which are Best for My Child?

Education Plans often offer High Support as individualized support are written into a formal plan by specialized school staff. Education Plans may be provided in the general education classroom, in a special education classroom, and/or the school campus based on the student's needs. Education Plans benefit or are needed for students who may be more than one or two grade levels behind; struggle with making relationships with peers/staff; struggle with controlling their emotions, and/or have a documented or suspected disability/diagnosis. They provide consistency so that everyone working with the child knows what help the child needs and how the help will be provided.

Education Plans must be specifically requested by parents or school staff and will be put into place if the child qualifies for the Plan based on school rules or the law. A student may need to be evaluated for the plan or a meeting may be needed to determine if the child needs an Education Plan

There are 3 Formal High Support Education Plans a child might qualify for that provide more intense academic or behavior support:

- ***A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP or Behavior Plan)***
 - ***A 504 Accommodations Plan (504 Plan)***
 - ***An Individualized Education Plan (IEP)***

A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is helpful for students who struggle with challenging behaviors that impede their education and need a formalized plan for all school staff to follow that teaches new behaviors and addresses the old ones while the improved behaviors are being worked on.

A 504 Accommodations Plan (504 Plan) may be needed for students with documented disabilities or impairments and need tweaks of the general education classroom, teaching style, schoolwork, navigating the school campus, and/or other adjustments to remove any barriers that the disability or impairment causes in school.

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP Plan) may be needed for students with suspected or documented disabilities that need to be taught skills in areas the disability affects, need instruction by specialized teachers and staff, and may need to be pulled out of the general education classroom to smaller classrooms or school locations for specialized instruction.

High Level School Support Plan: Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) is a formalized plan that has interventions, supports, and strategies designed to assist students whose behavior impedes their happiness, home lives, school lives, and self-esteem. A BIP is a systematic approach to changing challenging behaviors and teaching students more positive behaviors to replace them.

A BIP shows not only what school is going to do to help the student to turn around challenging behaviors but *how* schools will be working with the student so that there is a uniform approach for everyone working with the student (teachers, specialists, administration, parents) to follow.

BIPs include: an explanation of any behavioral triggers; why the student might engage in negative behaviors; steps for teaching of better new behaviors; incentives when a student uses the better behaviors; the crisis plan for when the student exhibits challenging behavior; and how the BIP will be monitored and adjusted to make sure it is helping the student.

An example of a BIP could be that a student who is having meltdowns in the classroom or shuts down due to anxiety is taught to use a pressure pass to go to a quiet place in the classroom or on campus to cool down and relax. A BIP for this behavior might include what a meltdown or anxiety looks like, how using the pressure pass would be taught, having the student practice going to designated cool down areas, how to handle the student when a meltdown or anxiety occurs, and rewards for the student when using the pressure pass instead of melting down or shutting down. BIPs can also be created for work avoidance/missing work, attentional issues, school avoidance/refusal, and/or any behavior getting in the way of the child doing well in school.

BIPs can be provided at the request of a parent or school as part of a formal 504 Plan or IEP or on its own as standalone support plan for a student. It is best practice that when a student shows a pattern of behavior and/or needs behavioral support, a BIP is put into place.

A BIP can be put into place without a formal evaluation if the parent and school have identified why, when, and how the behavior occurs or schools/parents may request a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) or a data collection plan take place over several weeks that will collect data on any specific behavior to help create the BIP based on what is observably happening when the student's behavior occurs. If a BIP is written into a 504 Plan or IEP, a student is legally entitled to it.

BIPs are in place and reviewed/changed as identified within them. Best practices are that BIPs should be reviewed every quarter by someone on the school staff and the parent to make sure they are working and changing the child's behavior or to see if they need to be tweaked to make them more effective.

A BIP must be requested through your child's teacher or school counselor/social worker (if their child is in Elementary School) or your child's assigned counselor or school social worker (Middle or High School) if your child does not have a 504 Plan or IEP. If your child has a 504 Plan, a BIP can be requested to the School 504 Liaison or child's counselor. If your child has an IEP, a BIP can be requested via your child's special education teacher or case manager.

Use our ***Behavior Intervention Plan: First Request Form*** to Request a BIP and Watch our ***Behavior Intervention Plan: Qualifying, Support Provided, and Parent Rights Video*** for More Information!

High Level School Support Plan: 504 Accommodations Plan (504 Plan)

A 504 Accommodations Plan (504 Plan) is a legal plan provided to a student with at least one documented disability or impairment from a licensed professional that documents adjustments or changes to any school or general education classroom rule, policy, classroom teaching, or school environment to remove any disability/impairment struggle the student has in accessing their education. These adjustments/changes are called Accommodations and Modifications in a 504 Plan. To qualify for a 504 Plan, a parent must provide written documentation from the licensed professional that their child has a disability/impairment and the disability/impairment must affect the child's learning, education, or access to school campus. Disabilities/Impairments could be physical or mental.

Supports in a 504 Plan for a student with a diagnosis of ADHD who has ADHD related issues manifesting in the classroom may include seating the student close to the source of instruction and away from distractions, private reminders to stay on task and turn in work, prompted short movement breaks at designated times or when showing signs of inattention, breaking long assignments into smaller parts to complete, and/or shortening assignments for attention span and just enough to show the student can complete work on the assignment.

Another example of supports in a 504 Plan for a student with learning struggles due to a diagnosed disability/impairment may include being provided with copies of notes/class materials, shortening assignments in half or just to show the student can do the work, extra time on assignments, retaking of tests if the student fails a test, having teacher check to make sure the student understands instructions/can do the work, the ability to use a calculator on most math work, the use of speech to text for longer writing assignments, and/or having directions or hard to read materials read to the student/provided in read aloud forms.

A 504 Plan is legal document and any supports provided in it must be upheld by all school staff working with the child.

Students may have to be evaluated for a 504 Plan or a school may determine the child needs a 504 Plan if the child's disability/impairments limits their participation in school/education. A 504 Plan stays in place until the child no longer qualifies for it and can be modified as needed by school staff.

Parents are provided with a 504 Plan and can make recommendations to the school on what should go into their child's 504 Plan. There is no legal requirement to have Parents' input in a 504 Plan but it is best practice. Parents must be given notice of the 504 Plan being created and a copy of it. A 504 Plan might include some Intermediate Level School Supports like counseling or limited small group support but does not include support/teaching by a special education trained teacher and often does not provide support in a specialized or *smaller classroom*.

If you think your child needs a 504 Plan, you will need to request it through your child's principal. It is best practice if you also request it through or cc the school's 504 Liaison or your child's counselor. Your DFS Representatives have letters to help you request a 504 Plan.

If a 504 Plan will not or is currently not providing the level of support your child needs, your child needs more services than just tweaks of school or general education classroom rules/teaching, and/or your child needs support and services with a very different curriculum and in a smaller classroom, you may want to request an IEP for more support as discussed below.

Use our **504 Plan: First Request Form** to Request a 504 Plan and Watch our **504 Plan: Qualifying, Support Provided, and Parent Rights Video** for More Information!

High Level School Support Plan: Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

A child who a parent or school staff suspects has a disability or who has a documented disability and possibly needs High Level School Supports may qualify to get an IEP. An IEP is a comprehensive education plan that involves goals in areas of a student's struggles, teaching of the goals by a special education teacher or trained professional in those areas, adjustments and changes to anything school related to remove any disability-related barriers (similar to a 504 Plan), and possible placement in a smaller specialized class for instruction based on the unique needs of the child. An IEP also may include related services such as speech, physical therapy, occupational therapy, adapted PE, specialized transportation, and counseling to support the child in areas of struggles.

An IEP is a legal document and any supports provided in it must be upheld by all school staff working with the child. It offers the highest level of support for a child and is the only plan that involves services to the child, instruction from a special education teacher, and the possibility of being pulled out into smaller, more specialized classes to work on particular skills.

For example, an IEP for a student with a learning disability may include: learning goals in the areas of struggle (Reading, Writing, and/or Math) to make growth in these areas; a teacher pushing in to a general education classes or the student put into smaller resource classes with a special education teacher to teach the subject related goals in area of struggle; supports for learning in classes such as shorter assignments, technological aids, and class notes provided to the student; and extended school year for classes during the summer to continue working on goals.

An IEP for a student with behavioral struggles may include: goals in the areas of frustration/anxiety management, work completion, dealing with peer issues; learning how to communicate effectively, and/or organization techniques; a teacher pushing into a general education class or a teacher pulling the student into a smaller class for specialized support in behaviors; supports for behaviors such as reminder to use calming techniques, areas or staff to go to when using calming techniques, extra time to turn in assignments/no late penalties for assignments; specific organizational support used with the student, and a Behavior Intervention Plan for the child (*see above BIP section*); and some occupational therapy for cool down or anxiety techniques support and devices.

A student must be evaluated for an IEP (called a special education evaluation) which may take up to 45-60 school days depending on your state's laws (in Nevada, it is 45 school days). While the special education evaluation is taking place for a possible IEP, parents can ask for Intermediate Level School Support, a Behavior Intervention Plan, and/or a 504 Plan (if the child has a documented disability/impairment) for some support.

If the student qualifies for an IEP, an initial IEP must be created within 30 calendar days of the day the student qualifies for it. The IEP is revised annually at minimum and the student gets IEP services for 3 years after they qualify initially. The student is re-evaluated to determine if an IEP is still needed every three years.

Parents are part of the decision-making team who create each yearly IEP (called the IEP Team) and have special rights to meaningfully participate in the creation of the IEP and to be invited to attend the annual IEP meeting.

If you think your child needs an IEP, you will need to request a special education evaluation through your child's principal. It is also best practice to let the school psychologist know of your request as the school psychologist will lead the evaluation and evaluation process that you will be involved in.

Use our ***IEP or Special Education Evaluation: First Request Form*** to Request an IEP and Watch our ***IEP Plan: Qualifying, Support Provided, and Parent Rights Video*** for More Information!