Let's Talk About...

Spina bifida and 504 plans

Children with spina bifida have special physical and learning needs. There are resources available for you and your child's school to help with these needs. Some of these include 504 Plans, Individualized Education Programs (IEP) , and Health Care Plans.

What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan is a plan of accommodations and modifications (changes at school to help your child go to school). This is for students with mental and physical problems. The people who might put together a 504 Plan might include these people:

- Your student
- Parents
- Teachers
- Principal
- Student administrator
- Support staff (such as a nurse, counselor, psychologist, language/speech pathologist)
- Student's doctor
- Student's therapist

What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

An IEP is a plan for special education students. If your child qualifies for special education, the school's special education teacher may write an IEP for her. The IEP is written instead of a 504 Plan. To qualify for special education, your child has to meet one of 13 categories written in the Special Education Rules. For example, your child may qualify for "Specific Learning Disability" if she does less in school than expected from an intelligence test. If your child does not qualify from that category, she may qualify in the category "Other Health Impaired."

What is a Health Care Plan?

A Health Care Plan lists specific health services that a child needs while at school. Your child's school nurse should write this plan even if you don't have a 504 Plan or an IEP. Contact your child's school and ask them to call the nurse in to write the plan. This is because the school nurse serves several schools and is not always at your child's school. Once this is written, the school nurse will train the school staff on how to help your child.

What services should the school provide?

Some services the school staff provides through either a Health Care Plan or 504 Plan include the following:

- Special transportation.
- First aid for latex allergy.
- Rest areas and short school days (for fatigue).
- Wheelchair for traveling long distances.
- Physical education adapted for your child.
- Recess.
- Special chair or desk to fit your child.
- Help carrying a tray through the lunch line.
- Emergency evacuation plan for your child.
- All parts of the school accessible to your child, or alternative routes provided (see the American with Disabilities Act [ADA] for children without a 504 Plan).
- Help for your child to move around.
- Bowel and bladder management—Your child should have someone assigned to catheterize her, change her clothes or diapers, or supervise her in the bathroom, as needed. You should provide supplies and a doctor's letter that explains these needs.
- Peer tutor or helper.

Where can I get more information?

You can learn more about getting special education help by going to the website on Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE): http://www.fape.org/.

Below are state parent training and information agencies for parents in the intermountain area:

- **Utah**
  Utah Parent Center
  800.468.1160 or 801.272.1051
  http://www.utahparentcenter.org/
- **Nevada**
  Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)
  702.388.8899 or 800. 216.5188
  www.nvpep.org
- **Idaho**
  Idaho Parents Unlimited, Inc.
  208. 342.5884 (Boise: 800.242.4785 (800.242. IPUL))
  www.ipulidaho.org
- **Wyoming**
  Wyoming Parent Information Center
  307.684.2277 or 800.660.9742
  www.wpic.org
- **Colorado**
  PEAK Parent Center, Inc.
  719. 531.9400 or 800.284.0251
  www.peakparent.org

Information on other state parent training and information centers:

- **The PACER Center**
  888.248.0822
  www.taalliance.org/ptidirectory/pclist.asp

For more information refer to the following handouts:

- ***Let's Talk About… Spina bifida and learning problems at home***
- ***Let's Talk About… Spina bifida and educational programs***
- ***Let's Talk About… Learning issues***

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Pediatric Education Services
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