

Let's Talk About...

Spina Bifida and 504 Plans

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

What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan designs a program of accommodations and modifications for students with mental and physical problems. It is different from an IEP, which is a plan for special education students. The people who might put together a 504 Plan might include the

- Student
- Parents
- Teachers
- Principal
- Student administrator
- Support staff (e.g., nurse, counselor, psychologist, language/speech pathologist)
- Student's doctor
- Student's therapist

What is a Health Care Plan?

A Health Care Plan lists specific health services that your 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. Since the school nurse serves several schools and is not always available, have the school call her in to write the plan. The nurse also trains the school staff on how to help your child.

What is an IEP?

If your child qualifies for special education, the school special education teacher may write an IEP for her. The IEP is written instead of a 504

Plan. Children must qualify for special education under one of 13 categories written in the Special Education Rules. Your child may qualify in the category "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 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; (801) 272-1051
<http://www.utahparentcenter.org/>
- Nevada
Nevada Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)
(702) 388-8899; (800) 216-5188
www.nvpep.org
- Idaho
Idaho Parents Unlimited, Inc.
(208) 342-5884
www.ipulidaho.org
- Wyoming
Wyoming Parent Information Center
(307) 684-2277; (800) 284-0251
www.wpic.org
- Colorado
PEAK Parent Center, Inc.
(719) 531-9400; (800) 284-0251
www.peakparent.org

Information on other state parent training and information centers:

- The PACER Center
(888) 248-0822
www.taalliance.org/centers/index.htm

For more information refer to the following handouts:

- *Let's Talk About... Spina Bifida and Home Strategies for Improving Your Child's Learning and Social Skills*
- *Let's Talk About... Spina Bifida and Educational Programs*
- *Let's Talk About... Spina Bifida and Common Learning Issues*



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