



SHARED VISION
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
Building Healthy Connections

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Understanding School Accommodations: IEPs vs. 504 Plans

Now that schools are back in session, the topic of school accommodations often comes up when children experience difficulties in the classroom. Some children need a range of accommodations and/or services, from extra time on tests, to specialized educational programming. Navigating this can be an overwhelming experience for parents, and it is easy to feel lost amidst all the jargon that surrounds school accommodations and special education.

The two terms you will hear most frequently are **IEP (Individualized Education Program)** and **504 Plan**. There may be some confusion around what these plans mean, as **they both deal with accommodating children with disabilities and/or other learning difficulties**. While they sound similar, there are distinct differences that are important to consider when figuring out the best route for your child.

What is an IEP?

An IEP (Individualized Education Program) is a special education plan that is developed for a child with an identified disability based on their specific needs. This is part of a federal legislation called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that all students with



disabilities have access to a free public education. In order to qualify, the school district must perform a special education evaluation to determine eligibility. Schools are required to conduct such evaluations, regardless of whether or not a student has been referred by a teacher or other professionals within the school.

After a formal evaluation is conducted by the school, children may be identified based on one (or more) of thirteen distinctions which then qualify them for special education services. These services can include speech/language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, education in a special education classroom, modified curriculum, and a range of other services for students with IEPs. Due to the legally binding nature of the IEP, there are a number of procedural safeguards in place to make sure that special education services and accommodations are being carried out as indicated in the plan. The IEP is evaluated at least once a year in order to determine progress in specialized education programs and set goals for the following year.



[What is a 504 Plan?](#)

A 504 plan focuses on accommodating children in school who have an identified disability, but can still learn within a general education environment. The name

“504” is from the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1975, which is a law that prevents discrimination against individuals with

disabilities. This is different from an IEP, in that the 504 plan only focuses on providing children with disabilities access to the same education services that every child is entitled to; they do not receive specialized education services. Additionally, children do not need to be evaluated by the school to receive a 504 plan. All that is necessary is proof of a disability, usually a doctor’s note or external evaluation.

A 504 Plan outlines various accommodations that children can receive based on what is needed. Typically this can consist of extra time on tests, copied notes, preferential seating, accessibility for students with a physical disability, and other accommodations that provide greater access to the general education curriculum. They are not entitled to the same access to

specialized services that are granted within an IEP plan, as accommodations in a 504 plan are generally meant to provide access rather than modification (when compared with an IEP). Additionally, a 504 plan does not have the same procedural safeguards as an IEP, and it is often the responsibility of parents and their children to ensure that the school provides the necessary accommodations.

The process of pursuing these plans can feel daunting. If your child is having difficulties in school and think that they may benefit from specialized services, it is important to contact the school to begin the process of determining eligibility for either an IEP or 504 plan. In some cases, a 504 plan is more than adequate for children to succeed and it is unnecessary to pursue special education services. In other circumstances, pursuing an IEP is important to ensure that your child has access to the specialized services that they need.

Shared Vision Psychological Services also provides consulting opportunities for parents who are interested in pursuing either of these avenues of support for their children. Contact us today if you are interested in learning

more!

Contact Us

Featured Support Groups - Now Enrolling

Social Skills Groups, Ages 4-12

Our weekly 50-minute Social Skills Groups have a relational focus that teaches children how to approach others, resolve conflict, and make friends. Our groups aim to help children develop a deeper capacity for relatedness that can be translated into more meaningful relationships, both at home and at school. This group is primarily focused on building healthy social skills, emotional expressiveness, and identifying and empathizing with the emotions of others.



Children in our Social Skills Groups often leave with the following tools:

- Increased patience
- Decreased impulsive behavior
- Confidence to initiate conversation
- Ability to resolve conflict
- Greater awareness of social cues
- Capacity to respond to others with understanding and empathy
- Feelings of connection with peers
- Increased self-esteem in social situations

High School Support Groups

Our weekly 50-minute high school groups will provide a safe space for teens to discuss their struggles and successes. Leaders help to facilitate group discussions about topics such as bullying, body image, self-confidence, academic achievement, sports, friendships, familial stress, and identity construction.

20-Something Support Group, Ages 20-29

This co-ed support group has been designed to meet the distinctive needs of individuals in their 20's as they navigate the many obstacles commonly found in young adulthood. With a heavy emphasis on connection and emotional awareness, this group provides a safe space to process the stressors of finding a career path, building self-confidence, creating meaningful relationships, and exploring one's emerging identity.



Women's Support Group

This weekly, process-oriented therapy group is open to adult women who are seeking a supportive, relational experience in which to explore presenting areas of distress and to strengthen each individual's strivings towards desired growth, change, and overall sense of well-being. Members that participate in our Women's Group find this environment to serve as a safe, non-judgmental, and collaborative forum in which they are empowered to enhance self-awareness, insight, and healthy coping strategies. The group consistently maintains a confidential, open-ended format, with discussion topics ranging from but not limited to:



- Relationship/Marital Struggles
- Work-Related Stressors
- Difficulties with Divorce/Separation Process
- Stress Management Difficulties
- Parenting Problems
- Chronic Medical Issues
- Anxiety & Depression
- Self-Esteem Issues
- Trauma/Abuse History
- Mourning & Loss
- Family Distress
- Adjustment to Life Transitions
- Goal-Setting Challenges
- Adult Identity Development
- Social Isolation

Register Today!

Other Services We Offer

- Individual, Couples, and Family Therapy
- Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluations
- Collaboration with Schools
- Consultation to Professionals
- Community Presentations, Seminars, and Training
- Pre- and Post- Adoption Psychological Services
- Developmental & Special Needs Psychological Services



Contact Us

Shared Vision Psychological Services, Inc.
(phone) 630.571.5750 | (fax) 630.571.5751
www.sharedvision.org

Shared Vision Psychological Services | 1200 Harger Road Suite 600 | Oak Brook, IL 60523
US

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