

504 Request Letter Tips!

Why a written letter?

A WRITTEN letter triggers important timelines in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA):

- 1) From the date the school district receives your letter, the school district has 15 calendar days to present you with an Assessment Plan for your consent.
- 2) From the date you receive an Assessment Plan, you have at least 15 calendar days to ask all the questions you need to feel comfortable to give “informed consent” by signing the plan.
- 3) From the date you consent to the Assessment Plan by signing it, the district has 60 calendar days to assess your child and hold the first Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting.

NOTE: Calendar days means that weekend days are counted.

These timelines pause when the school is out of regular session in excess of 5 school days.

Tips and Tricks for a 504 Request

STARTING THE LETTER:

Because this process is driven by timelines, make sure you date your letter. Make sure to fax, mail, or hand-deliver your letter to the school. **GET A RECEIPT TO SHOW PROOF OF DELIVERY.**

REASONS FOR CONCERN:

You may wish to give specific examples of difficulties and concerns you, teachers or doctor have noted. If you have a specific diagnosis, reports or evaluations already, you can include them with your letter. You may want to attach doctor’s documentation or report if you believe this will help your school district understand your child’s disability/needs, or state that you have this documentation and can make it available to the school district. You may want to include CA Star test results, samples of written work, report cards, etc. that support your reasons for concern. You may want to get the classroom teacher to give you concrete examples and work products in writing that support the need for further investigation of the child’s problems. The US Congress in IDEA law specifically chose to use the term “educational progress,” a broad term to encompass all kinds of progress a child is expected to make in school. Concern is not limited to academic progress alone. It can also mean motor challenges, social difficulty, behavior issues, sensory sensitivity, health impairment, communication, mental health, etc.

Some examples include:

Academic Concerns: My child is in 4th grade and scoring below basic in the State tests in math, despite doing all the homework and trying his best.

Motor Concerns: My child has extreme difficulty with fine motor tasks and cannot write, cut, or color sufficiently well to complete classroom assignments in the time allotted.

Behavior/Socialization Concerns: My child is having behavior difficulties that are impairing his ability to succeed in the classroom environment. For example, he can’t keep his hands to himself, sit still, can’t resolve conflicts or socialize in an age appropriate way, he is being disciplined regularly, going to the office, etc.

Specific Disability or Health Impairment Concerns: My child has a diagnosis of (name disability such as Autism, Dyslexia, Diabetes, Severe Allergy, etc., if applicable.) This adversely affects his educational progress because (exclusion, performance, fatigue, missing school, etc).

Transition-to-Adult Concerns: I am concerned that my child does not have the skills necessary to successfully transition into the community or college after graduation or completion of high school. For example, he cannot balance a checkbook, take public transportation, etc. The assessment should examine his social, educational, emotional, career and independent living skills in order to develop an appropriate transition plan in his IEP.

SPECIFIC EVALUATION REQUESTS (OPTIONAL):

If you know particular areas of known or suspected disability you believe need to be assessed, or know specific tests your child may need, you may request them.

Here are some examples, but use your own that are tailored to your child:

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Assessment: by a qualified AAC specialist for children who are non-verbal communicators. To my knowledge, the district does not have on staff any experts in this field. I have been recommended to [Expert Name, Title] in non-verbal communication, and unless the district has a comparable expert, I am requesting that you contract with [Dr. X] to do the non-verbal communication evaluation of my child.

Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment: by a qualified OT to determine how to support my child's need for proper positioning for learning due to his orthopedic impairment, and to help support his high sensitivity to sensory stimuli.

Assistive Technology (AT) Assessment: by a qualified and certified Assistive Technologist to determine the appropriate tools, strategies and services that may be necessary to assist my child in accessing and benefiting from the educational program. IDEA requires determination of AT needs for students.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA): by a qualified behaviorist trained in behavior analysis and positive behavioral support to determine the triggers and function of my child's behavioral difficulties in order to develop a Positive Behavioral Support Plan (BSP) and goals to enable my child to learn to replace behaviors impeding my child's learning, or the learning of others, with positive behaviors so that educational progress can be made.

ENDING THE LETTER:

After you have signed this letter, make sure to list all of the individuals who will be receiving copies of this letter. This should be the School Principal and other members of the child's educational team as needed.

Make sure to also list all of the enclosed attachments to this letter you may want to include to help the district understand the child's suspected disabilities, needs, diagnoses, and/or disability(ies) if known.