

**Norwalk Public Schools
125 East Avenue
P.O. Box 6001
Norwalk, CT 06852**

Section 504 Procedural Safeguards Notice

The Norwalk Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or disability in admission, access, treatment, or employment in its programs, services, and activities. Applicants, students, parents/guardians, employees, referral agencies, and all organizations holding agreements with the District are hereby notified of this policy. Any person with concerns regarding the District's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 or the Americans with Disabilities Act is directed to contact:

Name: Ralph Valenzisi
Position: District 504 Coordinator
Phone Number: (203) 854-4044
E-mail: valenzisir@norwalkps.org

This document summarizes the procedural protections and rights you have as the parent of student who may qualify for accommodations or services under Section 504 and the ADA.

INTRODUCTION. Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, along with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requires that the school district may not discriminate against students with disabilities. Accordingly, the district has adopted policies and procedures to ensure that discrimination does not take place. In the rest of this document, we will refer to these laws as "Section 504."

IDEA ELIGIBILITY. Many students who meet the definition of an "individual with a disability" under Section 504/ADA also qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This document does not address these students or their parents. Such students are served pursuant to the requirements of the IDEA. The rest of this document addresses only the rights of parents of students who satisfy the definition of an individual with a disability under Section 504 but do not qualify under IDEA.

AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATION. If it is determined that your child meets the definition of an "individual with a disability" under Section 504, then your child will be entitled to a free and appropriate public education. This means that your child's education will be designed to meet his/her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. A "free" public education means that no fees will be imposed on you except for the same fees that are imposed on parents of nondisabled students. However, insurance companies and other third parties that are obligated to provide or pay for services to your child are still obligated to do so.

NOTICE. You have the right to be notified by the district prior to any action that would identify your child as having a disability, evaluate your child for services under Section 504, or place your child in a program based on a disability.

EVALUATION. Prior to conducting an evaluation of your child for purposes of services under Section 504, the district will seek your informed written consent. An evaluation will not be conducted unless you give consent. However, school officials may review existing records, test scores, grades, teacher reports, and recommendations and other such information without your consent to the same extent they would do so for nondisabled students.

504 Evaluations must be conducted in a timely manner. The Norwalk Public Schools has adopted the same timeline for 504 evaluations as the timeline provided by the State Department of Education for evaluations conducted for students suspected of a disability under the Individuals with Disability Act (IDEA). This means that the team has 45 school days from the date of referral to the date of implementation of the 504 plan, less any time during which parents have not consented to the evaluations.

If, based on the facts and circumstances of your child's case, the school district determines that a medical assessment is necessary to conduct an evaluation in order to determine if your child has a disability and requires special education and related services under Section 504, the school district must ensure that the child receives this assessment at no cost to you.

If an evaluation is conducted, the school will make sure that

- All testing and other evaluation procedures are validated for the specific purpose for which they are used;
- They are administered by trained personnel in conformity with the instructions provided by the producer;
- They include tests and other evaluation materials designed to assess specific areas of educational need and not merely those designed to elicit a general IQ score; and
- Tests are selected and administered to best ensure that they accurately measure what the test seeks to measure, rather than any sensory, speaking, or manual impairments the student may have (except when the test is designed to measure sensory, speaking, or manual skills).

An evaluation that satisfies these requirements will be conducted prior to your child's initial placement and conducted or reviewed prior to any subsequent significant change in placement.

If your child is identified as an individual with a disability under Section 504 the school will periodically reevaluate your child. The Norwalk Public Schools evaluates eligible students every three years, consistent with the IDEA, or earlier/later upon the agreement of the team or the request of the parents or guardians, or before making any significant change in placement.

PLACEMENT. If your child is identified as an individual with a disability under Section 504, placement decisions about your child will be made by the school's 504 Team, who, are knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data, and the placement options. You will be invited to participate in any meeting of the 504 Team if your child's placement and/or services are to be discussed. The 504 Team will also ensure that your child is placed in the "least restrictive environment."

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT. If your child is identified as an individual with a disability under Section 504, your child will be placed and served in the "least restrictive environment." This means that your child will be served with nondisabled students in the regular education environment to the maximum extent appropriate. Prior to removing your child from the regular education environment due to his/her disability, the school will consider the use of supplementary aids and services. Your child will be removed from the regular education environment only if he/she cannot be served satisfactorily in that environment, even when supplementary aids and services are provided.

If it becomes necessary to serve your child in an alternate setting due to disability, the school will take into account the proximity of the alternate setting to your home.

EXAMINATION OF RECORDS. You have the right to see and examine any educational records that pertain to your child or are relevant in serving your child.

HEARINGS. If you disagree with a decision of the 504 Team regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of your child you have the right to an impartial hearing. You have the right to participate in such a hearing and to be represented by a person of your choice, including an attorney.

If you wish to request a hearing, you must make a written request for a hearing within 30 school days from the time you receive the written notice of the decision of the 504 Team. Your request for a hearing must be filed with the district's Section 504 Coordinator.

Upon receipt of your request for a Section 504 due-process hearing, the Board of Education shall appoint an impartial hearing officer, at Board expense, and schedule a Section 504 due process hearing within thirty (30) school days from receiving your request. The date of the hearing may be extended on mutual agreement by the parties, or on order of the hearing officer.

OTHER COMPLAINTS. You also have the right to file a complaint with the District's 504 Coordinator pertaining to harassment, retaliation or discrimination against your child in ways that do not involve your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement.

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS. You also have the right to file a complaint with the United State Office for Civil Rights.