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Understanding the Difference between IEPs and 504s.

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Almost all students with the 22q11.2 deletion syndrome need some type of assistance in school to successfully move through the curriculum at an age appropriate level. Schools can offer additional help offering a myriad of services such as: differentiating the curriculum, re-teaching/pre-teaching, providing therapy services, allowing accommodations (such as extended time on tests), changing the mode of instruction (small versus large group), etc. Usually there is the need to enter some type of formalized agreement to determine what those services are, how they will be implemented and who is responsible for providing the assistance.

Students with 22q11.2 deletion can be served in public schools under two separate special education umbrellas. The first is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the major special education legislation, and the second is through a 504 plan. The 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law and is attending an elementary or secondary educational institution receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.

In thinking about which program would be best for a child with 22q11.2 deletion, the over arching question is, "Does the child need ***modifications to the curriculum and special teaching techniques*** to be successful in school?" If so, the student should be served under the IDEA law, rather than through a 504 plan. The vast majority of students with 22q11.2 need specially designed instruction (especially in math and reading comprehension), small group instruction, social skills training, therapies and behavioral support. Usually students with 22q11.2 are ***not working at grade level*** and cannot understand the concepts without additional explanations and altered teaching methods. The 504 Plan is primarily used for students who have



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disabilities that require accommodations rather than special education services.

To help clarify this, here are some examples of students who are best served through 504 plans:

1) Sue is a gifted student who has very low muscle tone and is confined to a wheelchair. She has a great deal of difficulty holding a pencil and her writing is laborious. A 504 plan was developed to assist her that included providing extended time on tests, classroom notes and a scribe to assist her with writing.

2) Lindsey is a student with diabetes that requires careful monitoring of her insulin levels. This involves several visits to the school nurse each day and times when she misses class instruction. A 504 plan was developed to make sure she is provided with class notes and extra time to complete assignments. She also is exempt from tardy consequences when she is visiting the nurse.

3) Mike is a student with mild attention deficit disorder. He struggles with work completion and organization. However, his academic testing is at or above grade level in all of his subjects. A 504 plan was developed to provide additional monitoring of work completion through the use of a signed assignment notebook and weekly reports to his parents.

These examples have several main elements in common. All of these students are performing at (or close) to grade level, they can understand the material in a regular education classroom, and they can demonstrate mastery of the content. Although these students all have disabilities, they do not need *specialized instruction* to be successful in school. Students with 22q11.2 deletion usually have a much different set of challenges that require more intensive intervention, modified teaching strategies and a slower paced delivery of material. These types of services require the skills of special



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education staff members and therefore these students would fall under the IDEA law.

The IDEA law is a much more comprehensive program that allows for parental safeguards and carefully crafted individual education plans.

The following table highlights the main differences between the two programs:

	IEP	504
Purpose of plan	Provides individualized special education and related services to meet the unique needs of the child.	Provides services and changes to the learning environment to meet the needs of the child as adequately as other students.
Specific Law	The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) This is a federal special education law for children with disabilities.	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 This is a federal civil rights law to stop discrimination against people with disabilities.
Students Served	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students qualify for an IEP if they have one of 13 specific disabilities listed. (Children with 22q11.2 usually are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student can have any disability The disability must interfere with the child's ability to participate fully and



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • served under the Other Health Impaired Category) • The disability must affect the child's ability to perform and benefit from the regular education curriculum 	<p>/or learn in the general education classroom.</p>
<p>Decision Making Team</p>	<p>This law has specific criteria for who participates on an IEP team. It must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child's parent • At least one of the child's general education teachers • At least one special education teacher • School psychologist or other specialist who can interpret evaluation results • A district representative with authority over funding and special education services <p>With a few exceptions, the entire team must be present for IEP meetings.</p>	<p>The rules for a 504 team are much less defined. Usually the team consists of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent • Teachers • School principal
<p>Contents of the Plan</p>	<p>The IEP has required sections including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present levels of 	<p>The 504 plan is much less defined. There is not a standardized form and no specific requirements.</p>



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	<p>performance,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals, • Accommodations, • Standardized testing accommodations, • Modifications to the curriculum, • Related services such as therapies • Special education services • Extended school year • The timing of services (how many minutes, by who, in what environment) • Inclusion in regular education • Placement • Transition planning 	<p>It usually included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodations or supports the student needs • Who will be responsible for the service • Who will make sure the plan is implemented
<p>Independent Evaluation</p>	<p>Parents who disagree with the school's special education plan can request an independent evaluation by an outside expert at district expense. The district <i>does not</i> need to agree to pay for this. Outside evaluations, however, need to be considered in any IEP decision.</p>	<p>Parents may bring in outside evaluations they have paid for, but they cannot request the district fund an outside evaluation.</p>
<p>Parent Notice</p>	<p>The school must get written consent to do an evaluation or before the school can</p>	<p>The parents must give written consent for an evaluation</p>



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	<p>implement an IEP Parents also have the right to keep services in place while there's a dispute.</p>	
<p>Dispute Resolution</p>	<p>The IDEA law has specific guidelines for resolving disputes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation • Due process complaint • Resolution session • Civil lawsuit • State complaint • Lawsuit 	<p>The 504 Act also gives parents several avenues for resolving disagreements with the school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediation • Alternative dispute resolution • Impartial hearing • Complaint to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) • Lawsuit

Sometimes children with the 22q11.2 deletion, who are struggling in school, are denied special education services under the IDEA law because their evaluation scores or their classroom performance is too high to qualify. In many of these situations, it is possible to secure services by completing more comprehensive testing and by strong advocacy. Knowing your rights and coming to evaluation and IEP meetings prepared, can go a long way in navigating the special education maze.