

Section 504 and Service Agreements

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a civil rights law that covers the rights of all individuals with disabilities, not just school-aged children. It prohibits disability discrimination by any program or activity that receives federal funds. For example, it applies to public schools, colleges, and vocational programs. Under the law schools are required to provide appropriate adaptations and modifications for individuals who have disabilities, have a record of disabilities, or are regarded as having disabilities. A disability is defined as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.

The School District must provide each identified protected handicapped student enrolled in the district, without cost to the student or family, those related aids, services or accommodations which are needed to afford the student equal opportunity to participate in and obtain the benefits of the school program and extracurricular activities without discrimination. This is accomplished through the creation of a Chapter 15 Service Agreement.

Services, aids and/or accommodations should not be confused with best practices provided to all students. Best instructional strategies and practices are required by the School Board. Hence, best practices and instructional strategies are not part of the Service Agreement of services, aids and/or accommodations to Protected Handicapped Students. Students should only receive the services, aids and/or accommodations that are needed and required to access the general education curriculum and/or extracurricular activities. Services, aids and/or accommodations may be required in some environments but not all schools environments. The Service Agreement should clearly state when and where services, aids and/or accommodations are to be provided.