

Differences between IDEA IEPs, 504 Plans, and College Accommodations

IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law that governs any special education service or policy for children ages 3 to graduation (or until age 21 if the student remains in high school until then). An IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is developed by an “educational team” for that specific student and stipulates how that student’s education will be individualized for the child to learn and succeed. To this end, the student is often allowed modifications in the curriculum (such as with delivery and testing of the curriculum), and in the grading process to achieve some success in school. For example, a student with an IEP may earn an A in a course if he/she completes 70% of the coursework rather than 100%, or the student may be allowed the accommodation of having tests shortened or choosing from fewer possible answers.

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects individuals from discrimination based on their disabilities. This Act governs any public school or college that accepts any type of federal financial assistance. The seven-part Act is divided into Sections A-G. Subpart D applies to K-12 schools and Subpart E applies to postsecondary institutions. Subpart E mandates that qualified postsecondary students with disabilities be offered the opportunity to complete a degree with all other, non-disabled students.

The ADA

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a federal civil rights law structured to provide equal opportunities for all people with disabilities. The ADA requires equal access and protects individuals from discrimination based on their disabilities. The ADA trumps all other acts regarding students in the postsecondary world.

Differences Explained

A K-12 student is, in essence then, in an environment designed to ensure student **success**. However, a post-secondary student is in an environment that must ensure equal **access**. At the post-secondary level, the success of the student is up to the student.

Process	K-12	College
<i>What is the intent of the law?</i>	Students are entitled to a free appropriate public education; qualified persons with a disability cannot be discriminated against	To ensure that qualified persons with a disability will not be discriminated against and will have access—not entitlement—to academic programs and services
<i>Who is covered?</i>	Infants through high-school graduates	All otherwise qualified individuals who meet entry criteria and who can document the

		existence of a disability as defined by the ADA and who have needs related to access
<i>Central idea</i>	Education is a right. Fundamental alterations of programs and services are required.	Education is an opportunity. Students must meet admissions criteria and be otherwise qualified. Students must also follow/meet other criteria of the institution such as health, character, technical standards, conduct code and course objectives. No fundamental alterations of programs and curricula are required.
<i>Identification</i>	Schools responsible for identifying students	Students must self-identify
<i>Documentation</i>	Schools responsible for testing students	Students must arrange for and pay for their own testing
<i>Services</i>	Schools responsible for any needed services. School must provide whatever services will help the student succeed in class. If necessary, schools must provide individualized tutoring.	Students must seek out services. Students allowed only certain accommodations in college classrooms. Students must seek out tutoring, if needed, and must pay for it if the college does not provide tutoring for non-disabled students. Individualized instruction is not likely/guaranteed.
<i>Communication</i>	Schools must communicate with parents at regular intervals about the student's progress	College is not permitted to contact parents without student's permission
<i>Accommodation arrangements</i>	School must develop a formal plan and it is the school's responsibility to track student growth	Student must request and be eligible for accommodations EACH semester and the student is responsible for much of the accommodation process
<i>Accommodation differences</i>	Typical accommodations may include: reduced assignments (requiring students to submit less work than others), extended time on assignments, grading changes (counting daily work equal with semester tests), test format changes, repeated chances to make a passing grade	No reduced assignments, extended time on assignments is usually at the discretion of the professor, no grading changes, no test format changes other than providing equal access, no extra attempts at tests; in other words, accommodations must be reasonable and must not compromise the rigor and/or academic integrity of the class

Adapted from: <https://www.brynmawr.edu/inside/offices-services/access-services/information-students/differences-between-idea-ieps-504-plans-college-accommodations>