



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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Understanding 504 Plans and IEPs: A Brief Parent Overview of School Supports for Children with Health Conditions By Wendy Overturf

Many children with health conditions need extra support to be successful at school. However, the type of support a student may receive depends on their individual needs. Two federal laws, [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) and the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#), help ensure that students with disabilities and health conditions receive appropriate supports and services.

What is a 504 Plan?

A 504 Plan is designed to ensure that a student with a disability has equal access to education. It is based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a civil rights law that is meant to prevent discrimination. A child may meet criteria if a physical or mental impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning, walking, breathing, concentrating, or caring for themselves.

Examples of health conditions that may qualify:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Epilepsy
- Severe allergies
- Crohn's disease
- Cancer
- Anxiety disorders
- ADHD

Examples of what a 504 Plan May Provide:

- Classroom accommodations
- Permission to carry water, snacks, or medication
- Extra time for assignments
- Elevator access
- Frequent restroom breaks
- Modified attendance policies

What is an IEP?

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written plan developed under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students who need specialized instruction due to a disability.

A child with a health condition may meet the eligibility criteria under IDEA for Other Health Impairment (OHI), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or Orthopedic Impairment (OI) if the

disability adversely affects their educational performance and requires specially designed instruction.

Examples of health conditions that may qualify:

- ADHD
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Sickle cell disease
- Heart conditions
- Leukemia
- Tourette syndrome
- Other chronic or acute health conditions that affect educational performance

Examples of what an IEP May Provide:

- Always includes specially designed instruction tailored to the student's needs
- Speech, occupational, or physical therapy (related services)
- Will include goals related to disability related needs
- Behavioral supports and interventions
- Classroom accommodations and modifications

Students with the same health condition may qualify for either a 504 Plan or an IEP because eligibility depends on how the condition affects the student's education, not on the diagnosis alone. A student who needs only accommodations may qualify for a 504 Plan, while a student whose condition significantly affects learning and requires specialized instruction may qualify for an IEP.

504 Plan vs. IEP: At a Glance

504 Plan

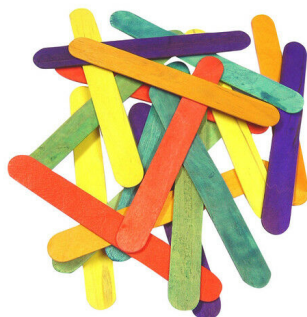
- Provides accommodations to help students access the learning environment
- Based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Ensures equal access to education
- Typically for students who can succeed in the general education curriculum with accommodations
- May include accommodations such as extended test time, health supports, preferential seating, or modified attendance policies
- Does not require annual goals or progress reporting
- May be a less comprehensive evaluation but often the same process is used as is used for a comprehensive special education evaluation

IEP

- Provides accommodations, specialized instruction, and related services
- Based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Ensures students receive a free appropriate public education tailored to their needs
- For students whose disability impacts educational performance and requires specialized instruction
- Includes special education services and may also provide related services, such as speech-language, occupational, or physical therapy, along with supplemental aids and services
- Requires annual goals and regular progress monitoring
- Requires a comprehensive special education evaluation and child must meet disability area criteria

If you believe that your child may need additional supports at school check these resources on how to request an evaluation. It is important to note that requests for evaluations must be submitted in writing.

- [Fact Sheet: Special Education Evaluation from Disability Rights WI](#)
- [Special Education Referral Form from WI DPI](#)
- [Requesting an evaluation](#) from Understood.org
- [IEP Mini-Module](#) (YouTube video) from WI FACETS



Popsicle Based Learning

(Popsicle sticks (craft sticks) are relatively inexpensive at [Walmart](#) or [Amazon](#).)

- [Popsicle Stick Math Activities](#)

Using popsicle sticks can help bridge the gap between abstract numbers and concrete understanding. This website has hands on activities for all skill levels.

- **Popsicle Stick Rhyming Words**

Directions:

1. Write word endings (word families) on several popsicle sticks, such as -at, -an, -ig, -op, -ake.
2. Write beginning letters or blends on other popsicle sticks, such as **c, h, m, p, s, tr, bl**.
3. Place the ending sticks in a row and have your child choose a beginning letter or blend.
4. Combine the sticks to make a word (e.g., c + at = cat).
5. Ask your child to think of and build other words that rhyme with it (hat, mat, sat, pat).
6. Read all the rhyming words together and listen for the common ending sound.
7. Challenge your child to use two or three rhyming words in a silly sentence.
 - Enjoy the read aloud, [“The Boy Who Invented the Popsicle.”](#)
 - [Popsicle Recipes for Kids](#)

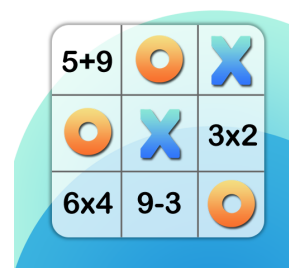
If you don't have popsicle molds you can use small paper or plastic cups, ice cube trays, empty yogurt containers, or muffin tins.



Keeping Kids Learning During the Last Month of Summer Vacation

Parent involvement during the summer is crucial to student success. According to the National Education Association, “Parents who are actively involved in their children’s learning at home help their children become more successful learners in and out of school.”

• Set aside time each day to read. Track the books your child reads and provide them with a special activity or treat when they reach certain milestones (for example, every 10th book).



Tic-Tac-Toe Math Games

Games are an excellent way to help children learn and retain new skills. They are naturally engaging and provide the repetition needed to master a concept while building positive feelings about math. A good math game can improve a child’s attitude toward math by reducing anxiety, building confidence, and helping them believe they can succeed. Check out these tic-tac-toe math games on the [Artful Math website](#).

- Tic Tac Ten — mentally add to make ten

• Do art projects based on favorite titles, such as drawing a favorite scene or making paper bag puppets.

- Visit your local library.
- Make every day educational. Children learn problem-solving, math, science, and vocabulary as they help with groceries, laundry, and cooking.

Math Practice-Shopping for School Supplies

Back-to-school sales for school supplies often start in early August. Once you have the supply list, have your child help find the “best deal” on common supplies. It is a great way to practice comparison shopping and everyday math skills. Most store ads can be found online.

- Lucky Numbers — multiplication facts
- Clippy — multiplication facts
- Round Four — rounding decimals
- Ultimate Tic Tac Toe – logic

Tell Stories with Photos

Today, almost everyone has a camera on their phone. Look at some photos. Ask your child: “What do you remember about that? How did you feel? What did you do first?” Or take new photos and make up a new story together.

WI FACETS EVENTS

There are very limited webinars during the summer. However, be sure to check some of our online resources. Check our [training calendar](#) for upcoming webinars beginning again in September 2026.

IEP Mini-Modules

These 30 to 40-minute modules break down what you need to know about the IEP process. You can watch through the entire ten-part series or jump right in with the modules that are most interesting to you. Clicking on the module will direct you to a registration page. After filling out the required information, you will be able to access the recorded video(s).

Training Webinar Recordings

This link has many of our archived webinars in case you missed one or perhaps want to review it again. The webinars are all organized into categories. Just select the title of the webinar you would like to view. Please note: You will have to provide some basic registration information before you are able to access the recording. If there were slides that were used during the webinar, they are included as well.

Supporting Literacy at Home

Check out these self-directed, interactive online literacy modules-“Literacy Training Series for Families” on the WI FACETS website. The purpose of this series is to help families better understand how to effectively support their children's literacy development at home and to increase communication with their children's teachers and school about literacy-related goals. While this information is beneficial to all families for supporting their children's literacy development, this series was specifically developed for families of students with special education needs.

UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

Training for Home Language Interpreters: Supporting Families through the Special Education Process

For those seeking training for home language interpreters for families at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, DPI has partnered with WI FACETS, LEAs, and other organizations to develop a one-day training for home language interpreters who interpret for families at IEP meetings. Language interpretation training is a requirement to meet the provisions outlined in DPI's [Providing Language Assistance to Parents guidance](#)

document. The training provides increased awareness of state and federal regulations related to the educational rights of students who receive special education through an IEP and who may also be English Learners. The training also provides increased knowledge and resources related to legal responsibilities and ethical considerations for translation and interpretation of special education terms and concepts.

In-person trainings:

August 14, 2026 – [CESA 4](#) – [Flyer](#) - [Registration](#) - hurry registration closes on August 7th!

Please visit the [WI FACETS Training page](#) for information on upcoming trainings and other resources!

[DPI Special Education and Pupil Services Pre-Conference-Save the Date](#)

Date: October 14, 2026

Starting in fall 2026, DPI has made some changes to the State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership. In partnership with the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Specialized Services (WCASS), DPI is coordinating a pre-conference day called the DPI Special Education and Pupil Services Pre-Conference. The agenda for the DPI pre-conference will follow a similar structure as DPI's previous Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership conferences. The full day pre-conference will continue to include content identified by DPI to support special education and pupil services leadership including:

- Keynote speakers
- DPI legal updates
- A variety of sectionals highlighting DPI speakers, projects, and resources

[Self-Determination Conference-Save the Dates](#)

Dates: October 19-21, 2026

Location: Kalahari Resort, WI Dells, WI

Self-determination means taking control of your life. This is one of the biggest events for people with disabilities and the people who support them. Learn how to live more independently, participate more in your community, and direct your public funds efficiently.

[Children Come First Conference-Save the Dates](#)

Dates: November 16-17, 2026

Location: Kalahari Resort, WI Dells, WI

As one of the largest and longest-running family-driven events in the state, this conference is dedicated to addressing the pressing needs of children and families living with mental and behavioral health issues.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

This website has links to information related to incidence, characteristics, diagnosis and treatment, and school services related to children who have other health impairments. The website also includes links to many other resources related to specific disorders.

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(WI DPI\)](#)

The Wisconsin DPI website has information related to the criteria for the disability category of Other Health Impairment (OHI). In addition to meeting the OHI criteria, the IEP team must show a need for specially designed instruction. The website has links to additional medical and health information that may be of interest. This site also has a link for more information on the Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation process.

[FINDING YOUR WAY– A Navigation Guide for Wisconsin Families Who Have Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities](#)

The Wisconsin Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Program developed this guide in partnership with the Community of Practice on Autism Spectrum Disorders and other Developmental Disabilities to assist families who may have concerns or questions about their child's development or

have recently received a diagnosis of a special health care need or disability. It provides brief descriptions of programs, services, and systems of support available in Wisconsin. The site also has contact information to learn more about these and other resources.

[Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs \(CYSHCN\)](#)

CYSHCN collaborates with national, state, and community-based partners to link children to appropriate services, close service gaps, reduce duplication, and develop policies to better serve families.

[Wisconsin Wayfinder: Essential Children's Resources](#)

Wisconsin Wayfinder supports families of children with delays, disabilities, special health care needs, and mental health conditions. Children's resource guides are available to assist families, caregivers, professionals, and organizations in finding a wide array of supports and services available through the Children's Resource Network. Their services are free and confidential. Call (877) 947-2929 or use the [contact form](#).

[Tourette Syndrome Resources](#)

The Tourette Association of America, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, created a library of comprehensive materials in a variety of languages about Tourette Syndrome and Tic Disorders.

[Epilepsy Foundation](#)

This website has information for parents and professionals related to epilepsy disorders. It also has a link to a ["toolbox"](#) and provides information on forms and information parents may want to have available in case of an emergency. Information about other support groups and services is also on this site.

[Living with Spina Bifida](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has programs and research which may help improve the quality of life and encourage full participation at every age for those living with spina bifida.

[Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder \(CHADD\)](#)

CHADD is a national nonprofit that helps people affected by ADHD through education, advocacy, and support. It offers parent and teacher training, webinars and workshops, and provides information related to ADHD.

[Family Voices of Wisconsin](#)

Family Voices of Wisconsin is a Wisconsin-based, family-led nonprofit organization that supports families of children and youth with disabilities and special health care needs. They help families navigate health care and community support and services by providing learning sessions, information, and resources.

[Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program](#)

The first three years are the most important building blocks of a child's future. The Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program is an early intervention special education program that supports the growth and development of children under the age of 3 who have delays or disabilities.

[Health Transition Wisconsin](#)

The Wisconsin Youth Health Transition Initiative aims to make the transition from pediatric to adult healthcare easier for youth with special healthcare needs in Wisconsin.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

[Specially Designed Physical Education/Adapted Physical Education](#)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that students with disabilities receive physical education services, specially designed if necessary, and must be made available to every

student with a disability. Students with disabilities are required to receive at least the same amount of physical education as their non-disabled peers. In Wisconsin, physical education is a required content area the same as reading, mathematics, science and social studies. It is not a content area that is "optional".

If specially designed physical education is prescribed in a student's Individual Education Program (IEP), the school district is responsible for the education of that student and must provide the services directly or make arrangements for those services to be provided through other public or private programs. Check the [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's website](#) for more information. Also check the [archived webinar](#) from WI FACETS on "Why Adapted Physical Education is Important for Children with Disabilities."

RESEARCH

Adolescents With Chronic Medical Conditions and High School Completion: The Importance of Perceived School Belonging

Kirkpatrick, K. M. (2020). Adolescents with chronic medical conditions and high school completion: The importance of perceived school belonging. *Continuity in Education*, 1(1), 50–63. DOI: 10.5334/cie.5

[Read Full Article](#)

Students with chronic medical conditions often face challenges in school due to their health needs, missed school time, and differences in how teachers and parents may view their abilities. Feeling connected to school, known as school belonging, is an important factor in academic success and can be strengthened through supportive relationships and a positive school environment. This study compared students with chronic medical conditions to their healthy peers in terms of school belonging and on-time high school graduation. It also examined how school belonging, health status, and graduation outcomes are related. The findings showed that students with chronic medical conditions felt less connected to their schools and were less likely to graduate on time than their healthy peers. However, a strong sense of school belonging was especially important for students with chronic medical conditions and was associated with a greater likelihood of graduating on time.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Newsletter Topics

September: Assistive Technology

October: Learning Disabilities

November: Emotional Behavioral Disabilities

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



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