Navigating Special Education and Section 504 Plans

Children with diagnoses may be eligible for additional supports in public schools beginning at age 3. Formal supports can be offered through an IEPs or a Section 504 Plan.

What is a Section 504 Plan?

A section 504 plan is a legal document that notes accommodations and modifications to support an individual with a disability. In order to qualify for a Section 504 plan, a child must have a disability which substantially limits one or more major life activity.

Some things to consider when asking for additional support

- You can request an evaluation for a Section 504 plan and/or an IEP.

- It is best to request an evaluation in writing to your school principal or your district's special education department.

- Make sure you share information regarding diagnoses, information from therapists, recent evaluations, etc. in order to help the school team in making a plan to support your child.

- Schools are legally required to respond to your request for an evaluation within 14 school days. They may suggest informal supports, create a Section 504 plan, or agree to a special education evaluation.

What is an IEP?

IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. An IEP is a legal document that is a comprehensive plan on how the public school will support a student with a disability. This can include accommodations, modifications, specialized programing, and minutes from different service providers. In order to qualify for an IEP, the IEP team must identify a disability and find that the disability is significantly impacting the child's school performance.

What happens after the school starts an evaluation?

- Schools must complete the evaluation within 60 school days.

- During this time, they may do additional testing, interviews, observations and/or rating forms.

- The school will set up an eligibility meeting where they will share all of their results and provide recommendations for next steps.

- Next steps may include writing an IEP, 504 plan, or supporting your child through informal supports and interventions.

THE **GOLDMAN CENTER** OF **CHICAGO**