



# Mount Laurel Schools

Section 504  
Americans with Disabilities Act  
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*The Mount Laurel School District is an equal opportunity educational institution and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability in its activities, programs, or employment practices as required by Title VI, Title IX, and Section 504.*

## **Introduction - What is Section 504?**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals from disability-based discrimination. School districts are required to provide Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to children with disabilities.

The intent of Section 504 ensures eligible students are provided with a full range of reasonable accommodations needed to participate in public education programs and activities. These protections also extend to student needs outside of the school day, including extracurricular activities, sports, and after-school care.

The process for accommodating students begins by identifying individuals with disabilities and evaluating those students. Parents, teachers, and school staff are a part of the process. Information used to determine whether a child is eligible under Section 504 may include and is not limited to the following: teacher feedback, assessment data, parent input, medical documentation, general classroom performance. If a student is determined to be eligible, a written 504 plan is created which outlines the accommodations the team has determined necessary. Parents have due process rights, and if there is a disagreement with the determinations of the school, they have a right to an impartial hearing.

504 plans are reviewed annually or if there is a significant change in school placement or program to determine if accommodations should be maintained, removed, or changed.

## Definitions under Section 504

“Individuals with disabilities” under the Section 504 law, are defined as persons with a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. People who have a history of, or who are regarded as having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are also covered.

“Major life activities” include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning.

“Substantially limits” is defined as being unable or is significantly restricted in the condition, manner, or duration under which an individual can perform a major life activity that the average person in the general population can perform.

Some examples of impairments which may substantially limit major life activities, even with the help of medication or aids/devices, are: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, blindness or visual impairment, cancer, deafness or hearing impairment, diabetes, and neurological impairments..

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive but provides examples of areas that may possibly be considered:

- Difficulty completing classroom work/activities at grade level expectations/standards
- Performance consistently below level on District Benchmark assessments
- Standardized test results below district grade level norms
- Grades below “C” in 2 or more subject areas
- Frequent disciplinary actions and/or suspensions

## The 504 Process

The plan created for eligible students is referred to as a 504 plan. The 504 plan covers accommodations, services, and support the child will be receiving in order to have access to education at school. A 504 plan is different and less detailed than an Individualized Education Program (IEP). While IEPs offer modifications or changes to curriculum, a 504 plan outlines accommodations to allow students to access the current curriculum.

The 504 process includes the student referral, eligibility determination, plan development, monitoring and annual reevaluation. The school's 504 committee will review the student referral and the student's relevant data to determine if a 504 plan is necessary. The committee determines the impact, if any, the student's disability is having on the student's life (academic, social/emotional, personal). If they determine that the student requires a 504 plan, the committee will develop an individualized accommodation plan, which includes monitoring and annual review guidance.

### Referrals

The school district must evaluate a student prior to providing services under Section 504. The parent/guardian, teacher, nurse, school counselor, I&RS team, Child Study Team (CST) or other school staff member may submit a referral request using the relevant form. The written request is forwarded to the school's 504 coordinator, who will provide the legally required overview of the process and parental rights and obtain parental consent to initiate the 504 process. If a parent refuses consent for an initial evaluation and the school district suspects the student has a disability, Section 504 provides that the school district may use due process hearing procedures to seek to override the parents' denial of consent.

Within 15 school days of the receipt of the referral, the student's parent/guardian will be notified that the student is being considered for evaluation by the 504 committee and provided notice of parent rights and procedural safeguards. It is important to note that having a condition or disability does not automatically qualify a student for a 504 plan. The condition must present a barrier to the student's ability to access the same educational opportunities as a non-disabled student. The standard used to determine if there is a substantial limitation is "average performance in the general population" and not the optimal performance for a person.

After receipt of the request, the school will send a form requesting relevant medical, educational, behavioral and/or psychological records, as well as physician certification of eligibility where appropriate, if not received with the initial 504 parent referral, or if additional documentation is required.

Pending completion of all forms, a meeting will be scheduled within 20 calendar days of receiving a referral to determine whether the student is eligible.

See [Appendix D](#) for student referral forms.

## **Eligibility**

The school's 504 Coordinator will provide an overview of the process and detail parental rights. The 504 Coordinator will request parental consent to obtain a collection of data from a variety of sources (Parent Input, Medical Reports/Records, Teacher Input, Nurse Health/History Form, School Records, etc). The 504 Committee will review this information to determine if the student meets eligibility for a 504 Plan.

To be eligible for Section 504 the committee must identify one or more of the following:

- physical or mental impairment
- substantial limitation
- impact on educational performance

A student functioning at an average level in comparison to his or her grade level peers, is considered not eligible for services under Section 504. The limitations listed above must have an adverse effect within the educational setting.

## **Determination Process**

Placement decisions are determined by the 504 Committee. This committee includes persons knowledgeable about the student being referred. The committee reviews the student's evaluation data and placement options that meet least restrictive environment requirements. The 504 committee is typically composed of the following:

- School Administrator who can authorize accommodations and/or alternative placement
- Counselor who can interpret scores and offer other insights on the child
- Current Classroom Teacher(s) working regularly with the child
- Psychologist, social worker or other specialist, as appropriate
- Nurse, if any medical information is required

The student's parent(s)/guardian(s), although not officially a member by law, is invited to be present at the determination meeting.

## **504 Appeals Procedure**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a procedure has been established whereby parents and students can be assured of a prompt and fair disposition of their grievances involving eligibility under Section 504, development and /or implementation of a Section 504 Accommodation Plan or any other issue related to Section 504.

If a child's parent/guardian(s) disagrees with the determination of the 504 Committee, they may appeal the decision. Grievances must be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

See [Appendix D](#) for the appropriate form and further details outlining the grievance procedure.

## **504 Plans and Testing Accommodations**

As directed by the New Jersey Department of Education, Section 504 plans are NOT to be written for the sole purpose of providing accommodations on standardized testing. If the student does not need 504 accommodations during the regular school day, then such an accommodation may not be appropriate. Any concerns should be directed to your school's 504 Coordinator.

## **Progress Monitoring and Annual Review**

Student progress is monitored continually throughout the school year through consultation with the 504 coordinator, classroom teacher and other professionals supporting the student. A review is conducted annually to evaluate the effectiveness of the accommodations and to determine if the student is still eligible for the plan. The 504 coordinator meets with the appropriate teachers to discuss the student's performance. Parent/guardian(s) are invited to participate in this review.

Medical documentation may need to be updated annually depending on the nature of the student's disability.

## Appendix A - Common Accommodation Examples

Following are examples of accommodations that may be used to address learning difficulties. Depending on the student's profile and/or the 504 committee's determination, other accommodations may be appropriate.

- Extended time on test/assignments
- Peer assistance with note taking
- Change of font on worksheets
- Decrease required amount of written work
- Provide small group instruction
- Reduce homework
- Provide study guide
- Provide visual schedule
- Frequent feedback
- Computer aided instruction
- Enlarged print
- Behavior intervention plans
- Student contracts
- Self monitoring strategies
- Read tests
- Provide books on tape
- Use color coding or highlighters
- Provide assistive technology devices for assignments in school
- Provide FM system
- Provide student with note taking format
- Graphic organizers
- Provide a quiet place to complete work (i.e., study carrel)
- Check homework planner

Please note:

Remember accommodations do not change the curriculum. Accommodations help provide equal access to the curriculum.



## Appendix B - Determination Process Overview

1. Student Referral - Submitted by adult knowledgeable about the student
2. 504 Committee Referral Review
3. Case Manager Assigned
4. Parental Notification
  - a. Written communication acknowledging referral from 504 Committee chairperson or designee
  - b. Appeal Process shared
5. Initial Request Determination
  - a. If initial request denied
    - i. Parent notification with rationale
  - b. If request for review accepted
    - i. Student Data Collection
    - ii. Information and data from gathered and reviewed by 504 team
    - iii. Determination Meeting
    - iv. 504 team reviews and discusses collected information.
      1. Student Determined Ineligible
        - a. Parent Notification
      2. Student Determined Eligible
        - a. Accommodation Identification
        - b. Committee develops accommodation plan based on student's identified needs
        - c. Parent Notification
        - d. Parent(s)/guardian(s) notified of determination.
        - e. Plan Development
        - f. Committee creates written 504 plan outlining accommodations, requirements, and supporting information including plan monitoring, review/re-evaluation dates.
        - g. Plan Shared
        - h. 504 plan shared with parent(s)/guardian(s) to be signed.

## **Appendix C - Resources**

[U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights - Protecting Students with Disabilities.](#)

[State of New Jersey Department of Education Parental Rights in Special Education](#)

[Office of Civil Rights - Protecting Students With Disabilities](#)

## Appendix D - Forms

The platform Mount Laurel uses for the 504 Process is *Frontline 504*. The majority of communications are sent through *Frontline*. Parents/guardians are advised to check their inbox and spam folder for messages from *Frontline*.

Form 1 - [504 Checklist](#)

Form 2 - [Notice of Parent Referral and Request for Consent to Review/Conduct Evaluation](#)

Form 3 - [Written Notice of Parental Rights](#)

Form 4 - [Grievance Procedures](#)

Form 5 - [Parent/District Request for Eligibility](#)

Form 6a - [Physician Certification for Eligibility](#)

Form 6b - [Authorization for Release of Student Records](#)

Form 7 - [Parent Input Form](#)



### 504 Review Checklist

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members: \_\_\_\_\_

	Date	Sent	Received
Letter from parent requesting 504 meeting			
Parent letter including request acknowledgement, 504 information, parental rights notification (Forms 2,3,4)			
Appropriate documentation is received: Physician Authorization, Release of Records Form (Forms 6a, 6b)			
Parent Input Form (Form 7)			
504 committee meeting scheduled			
Evaluation form sent to teachers (Form 8)			
Meeting notes and plan written or 504 is denied (Form 9, 10)			
Accommodations reviewed and signed off by staff (Form 11)			
Parent letter detailing 504 plan and accommodations/denial letter (Form 12 OR Form 13)			
Assistive Technology Authorization sent and signed by parent (if needed) (Form 14)			
Annual spring review letter sent by counselor (Form 15)			



[School Letterhead]

**Section 504 Notice of Parent Referral and Request for Consent to Review Student's Records and/or Conduct Evaluation**

*Sample Letter to Parent*

Parent/Guardian of [STUDENT NAME]  
[Address]

Date:

RE:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am in receipt of your referral to the Section 504 Team. The Team is responsible for determining if the above student qualifies as being an individual with a disability under the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The initial step in the Section 504 process is to review current information and obtain additional evaluative information, if necessary, to determine if the student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits\* one or more major life activities. If the student is found eligible, the information gathered will be used to develop an appropriate Section 504 Accommodation Plan. In order for the Team to collect the evaluative information, you must give written consent. A consent form is enclosed for you to sign and return.

If you have any evaluation information that you want the Section 504 Team to consider, please submit the information to our office. Any information you submit will be considered by the Team as part of its evaluation. Please be aware that if your child is attending Hartford and/or Thomas Harrington Middle School, they may require updated medical documentation.

Once the evaluative information is collected, a meeting will be scheduled to review the evaluation results, determine eligibility, and discuss appropriate recommendations with you. You will have the opportunity to actively participate at the meeting, and you may be accompanied by anyone of your choosing with knowledge or special expertise about the student. Before the meeting you will receive a written notice of the date, time and location of the meeting, and we encourage your attendance.

Enclosed is a copy of the Section 504 Procedural Safeguards Notice that explains your rights regarding the Section 504 process. If you have any questions regarding this notice, the request for consent, or any of the additional materials enclosed, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Upon your request, we will arrange a meeting to discuss any questions that you may have about the proposed evaluation.

Otherwise, please sign and return the enclosed consent form as soon as possible so that we can address your child's needs in a timely manner.

Sincerely,  
*[Principal Name]*

Cc: 504 Coordinator



## **Written Notice of Parental Rights**

### INFORMATION REGARDING SECTION 504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

Section 504 is a federal law that prohibits discrimination against persons with a disability in any program receiving federal financial assistance. To be eligible under Section 504 a student must:

1. Have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (major life activities include activities such as caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working);
2. Have a record of such an impairment; or
3. Is regarded as having such impairment.

In order to fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the Mount Laurel School District recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding its personnel and students. No discrimination against any person with a disability will knowingly be permitted in any of the programs and practices in our schools. The school district has specific responsibilities under the law, including the duty to identify, evaluate, and if the child is determined to be eligible under Section 504, to offer reasonable accommodations and to afford access to appropriate educational services.

If the parent or guardian disagrees with the determination made by the professional staff of the school district, he/she has a right to file a grievance under the School District grievance procedure or pursue remedies in administrative or judicial forums.

Attempts to resolve issues should first be addressed with the Building Principal. If there is no resolution at this level, please contact the Assistant Superintendent, Mrs. Mridula Bajaj. Any alleged discriminatory practices within the scope of Section 504 should be addressed through the grievance procedure, which is available in the office of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.



## Section 504 Grievance Procedures

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the following procedure has been established whereby parents and students can be assured of a prompt and fair disposition of their grievances involving eligibility under Section 504, development and/or implementation of a Section 504 Accommodation Plan or any other Section 504 related issue.

1. The grievant must present a completed 504 Complaint Form to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. This form can be obtained through that office.
2. Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment has 10 working days in which to investigate and respond to the grievances and the accused.
3. If not satisfied, the grievant or accused may appeal within ten-working days of the receipt of the decision from Step 2, to the Superintendent or designee. The response from the Superintendent or designee must be given within 10 working days.
4. If the grievant or accused is not satisfied with the decision at Step 3, an appeal may be made within ten working days to the Mount Laurel Board of Education. The Board may consider the appeal as a full Board or as a committee and may grant the grievant a hearing. If the appeal is heard by a committee, the committee will make its recommendation to the full Board. The decision by the Board will be made within 30 working days of receipt of the appeal.
5. If the grievant is not satisfied with the Board's decision, the grievant can have the case referred to the County Superintendent of Schools.
6. Although all attempts are made to resolve Section 504 issues at the local level, the grievant maintains the right to by-pass the grievance procedure and submit a complaint directly to any or all of the following agencies:

The Commissioner of Education  
Bureau of Controversies and Disputes  
New Jersey Department of Education  
PO Box 500  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
Phone: (609) 292-5706

U.S. Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
32 Old Slip, 26<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10005  
Phone: (212) 264-3313 or (212) 637-6330

New Jersey Division on Civil Rights  
Civil Rights Complaints, Civil Division  
United States Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Room 700  
Newark, New Jersey 07102  
973- 297-2010 (Fax)



**Parent/District Request For Eligibility Under Section 504**  
[SAMPLE Letter]

Date:

Parent/Guardian Name(s):

Child's Name:

I (We) believe, [student's name] presently a student in grade at [school name] should be evaluated and determined eligible under Section 504. My (Our) reasons for believing that reasonable accommodations should be offered under a Section 504 Accommodation Plan are as follows:

I (We) believe the following reasonable accommodations may be considered in order to afford reasonable access.

A copy of all relevant medical, educational, behavioral, and/or psychological records (is ) (is not ) enclosed.

Parent Signature





## Physician Certification for Eligibility Under Section 504

Patient name:

Examination Date:

Physician Name:

NJ License Number:

I certify that the above named patient is permanently/temporarily disabled and may require accommodations.

The specific diagnosis that would qualify the patient for eligibility under Section 504 is:

I examined the above named patient on and certify that the patient has the following functional limitations:

Physician Address:

Physician Phone Number:

Medical Specialty:

Physician Signature:

Date:



## Authorization for Release of Student Records

Student Name:

Physician Name:

I, [parent/guardian] hereby authorize the above listed physician to exchange any Protocol Health Information (PHI) including, but not limited to confidential medical, psychological and or sociological information to Mount Laurel Township Schools 504 committee for the purpose of determining eligibility under Section 504 and, if applicable the development of a Section 504 Plan. By signing this form I authorize the release of a copy of PHI to the Board.

Any information shared will be treated in a professional and confidential manner. Information received by the District will be placed in the student's confidential file.

The authorization is given voluntarily. The District will not condition the grant of eligibility and /or disability accommodation on the giving of this authorization.

I understand that I may revoke this authorization at any time by giving written notice of my revocation to the District. I understand that revocation of this authorization will not affect any action taken in reliance on this authorization before written notice of revocation was received.

This authorization expires one year from the date of the below signature.

I had the opportunity to read and consider the contents of this authorization, and I understand that, by signing this form, I am confirming my authorization of the use and/or disclosure of my PHI, as described in this form.

---

Parent/Guardian Signature

---

Date



## Section 504 Parent Input Form

Student:

School:

Birthdate:

Grade:

Parent/Guardian Name(s):

**Please answer any questions that you think might be helpful to the Section 504 Team:**

What are some of your child's strengths?

What does your child do when not in school?

Please describe your child's behavior at home?

Have there been any important changes within the family during the last 3 years?

Do you feel your child is experiencing problems in school?

When were you first aware of this problem?

What do you think is causing the problem?

What time does your child go to bed at night?

Does your child usually eat breakfast?

What methods of discipline are used with your child at home?

What is your child's reaction to discipline?

Has your child mentioned any problems with school? If so, how does he/she feel about the problem?

**Health History**

Please describe any serious illnesses, accidents, or hospitalizations.

Does your child appear to have any physical health problems, including allergies?

Is your child receiving service(s) from another agency?

Is your child currently taking medications? If so, please list.

Are there any known side effects from the medication?

Please tell us anything else that you think would be helpful in planning for your child's success at school.

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Parent/Guardian  
(Print Name)

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Signature

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Date