Education Plans for
Children with Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can affect how well your child can take part in activities and communicate in their classroom. This can happen even if your child has hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening devices or sign language interpreters.

Things that can make it hard for students with hearing loss to understand speech in their classroom include:

- No visual cues from the teacher and other speakers
- Background noise
- Reverberation (sounds echoing back)
- Distance from the speaker
- Difficulty localizing sounds or speakers
- The student’s ability to advocate for themselves

What kind of support may be available for my child?

Your child may qualify for support at school through either an Individualized Education Plan (called IEP) or a 504 plan. These documents set out a plan for extra help and services your child may qualify for. They are based on the impact your child’s hearing loss has on their ability to take part in classroom teaching and activities.

What is the difference between an IEP and 504 plans?

Individualized Education Plan - IEP

An IEP describes services that your child receives in a special or regular education setting. It includes specific goals for them to work on during the year and describes any special support, including school-based therapies and specially designed instruction, needed to achieve them.

The IEP is developed by key school staff and you. The team meets, reviews the assessment information about your child and designs an educational program to address your child’s educational needs. The IEP is monitored and managed by your school or school district.

504 Plan

A 504 plan is different from an IEP. The main difference is that a 504 plan is a list of accommodations that a student needs to be able to take part in their regular education classroom. The 504 is often managed by the school in partnership with district specialists. This may include an educational audiologist and or a teacher of deaf and hard-of-hearing.
How will I know which plan my child needs?
School staff will work with you to decide which plan is best for your child. This may include your child’s teacher, school counselor, educational audiologist or teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing and special education teacher or coordinator. The decision-making process may include evaluating your child and reviewing their academic and other related information. You have a right and responsibility to participate in the meetings.

What are the types of services my child may qualify for?
The types of services or accommodations your child may qualify for include:

- Hearing Assistive Technology (called “HAT”) including microphone (FM/DM) systems
- Interpreters
- Note takers
- Preferential seating
- Room modifications
- Help working on self-advocacy goals
- Visual aids
- Extended time on tests and assignments
- Testing modifications

Who should I contact for more information or to start the process?

- You or your child’s teacher, nurse, counselor, psychologist, audiologist, teacher of deaf and hard-of-hearing, speech and language pathologist, or other staff member can request an evaluation for an IEP or 504 plan.
- If you are unsure which plan is appropriate for your child, contact the school principal.
- You will likely be asked to sign a release of information form to permit communication between school staff and your child’s healthcare providers if needed.
- Your child is not guaranteed to qualify for an IEP or 504 plan, but you will need to work with school staff through this decision-making process.
- Don’t be afraid to advocate for your child. Your job as a parent is to start this process if your child needs help. Parental involvement is very important.
- Be prepared to regularly check in with school staff to ensure that the IEP or 504 plan is being followed.
What if my child attends a private school?

Private schools are not required by law to provide IEP and 504 plan services. However, your local school district is responsible for evaluating your child to see if they are eligible for special services. They can provide services and accommodations under an IEP if your child qualifies and if you choose for your child to attend their neighborhood public school. For more information, contact your local public school district.

Where can I get more Information?

• Find out how special education works from the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/Families/
• Review an IEP checklist for recommended accommodations and modifications for students with hearing loss from handsandvoices.org/resources/docs.htm
• Read a comparison chart of differences between 504 and IEP (called IDEA) plans. raisingspecialkids.org/_media/uploaded/5/0e1833673_504comparisonofsection504withideaandada.pdf
• Watch videos of family information sessions at Seattle Children’s Hospital. Topics include IEP and 504 Plans for children with hearing loss. seattlechildrens.org/clinics/childhood-communication-center/patient-family-resources/#FIS
• Learn about the Washington State Outreach Team for deaf and hard-of-hearing students their families, and school teams at www.wsd.wa.gov/outreach/
• Visit “School Aged Children with Hearing Loss” at successforkidswithhearingloss.com