



Di'Marco's Gifts
Embracing Neurodiversity One Gift At A Time

Your IEP/504 Parent Advocacy Toolkit

Guiding Your Family With Care

Tools to Prepare, Participate, and Advocate With Confidence

A Georgia-focused resource for families

Practical worksheets, questions, templates, and trusted starting points for preschool through college and career transition.

Start Here

You know your child best. This toolkit helps you organize what you see, ask focused questions, and work with your school team. It is educational—not legal advice—and plans must be individualized to your child's strengths, needs, and educational access.

Quick action steps

- Gather report cards, evaluations, work samples, attendance information, medical or therapy records, and prior plans.
- Write down strengths, needs, and examples of barriers your child experiences at school.
- Submit important requests in writing and keep copies, dates, and names in your records folder.
- Ask the school who coordinates special education or Section 504 and how to request a meeting or evaluation.

IEP and 504: Similar Goal, Different Path

Both can support students with disabilities in public schools. The right path depends on the student's individual needs and eligibility—not on a diagnosis alone.

Topic	IEP	504 Plan
Primary law	IDEA	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
Main purpose	Specially designed instruction and related services for an eligible student.	Equal access through individualized accommodations, aids, services, or modifications.
Eligibility	Student meets IDEA criteria and needs special education.	Student has an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.
Typical plan	Present levels, annual goals, services, accommodations, placement, and progress reporting.	Individualized accommodations and supports that address access barriers.
Evaluation	Full and individual evaluation before initial special-education services; consent required before initial evaluation.	Individual evaluation before a district classifies a student or provides related aids/services.

Requesting an Evaluation

A parent may request an initial evaluation. Send the request to the principal, special education director, or Section 504 coordinator; keep a dated copy. A school must obtain parental consent before conducting an initial special-education evaluation.

Ready-to-Use Evaluation Request Letter

Date: _____

To: [Principal, Special Education Director, or 504 Coordinator]

School/District: _____

Dear [Name],

I am the parent/guardian of **[Student's Full Name]**, who is in **[grade]** at **[school name]**. I am writing to request a comprehensive evaluation to determine whether my child may be eligible for special education and related services under IDEA and/or accommodations and supports under Section 504.

I have concerns about: **[learning, communication, attention, behavior, sensory needs, social-emotional skills, attendance, executive functioning, medical needs, or other concerns]**. Examples include: **[brief examples, dates, teacher feedback, grades, work samples, or other information]**.

Please provide written notice of the district's decision and the next steps, including any consent forms needed to begin an evaluation. I can be reached at **[email/phone]**. Thank you for your attention to my child's educational needs.

Sincerely,

[Parent/Guardian Name]

[Address] | [Phone] | [Email]

Prepare for the Meeting

Parent Meeting Agenda & Question List

- Start with your child’s strengths, interests, and what helps them feel successful.
- Review current data: evaluations, grades, attendance, work samples, behavior information, and progress reports.
- State your main concern and the outcome you hope the team will consider.
- Ask what need each goal, service, or accommodation is intended to address.
- Ask how progress will be measured, who will provide each support, and when you will receive updates.
- Ask what the team will do if a support is not working.
- Before leaving, summarize decisions, action items, responsible person, and timeline.

Meeting Follow-Up Record

Meeting date	Attendees	Decisions / Action items	Who / By when

Student Strengths & Needs Profile

My child’s strengths, interests, and motivators	
School barriers or needs we observe	
What helps at home, school, or in the community	
Top priorities for this meeting or school year	



Accommodation Idea Bank

These are discussion starters, not automatic entitlements. Supports should be based on the student's documented needs and reviewed for effectiveness.

Need area	Possible supports to discuss
Attention and executive functioning	Visual schedule; chunked directions; check-ins; planner support; extended time; preferential seating; reduced-distraction setting.
Reading and written expression	Text-to-speech; audiobooks; speech-to-text; graphic organizers; copies of notes; alternative ways to show learning.
Math and organization	Step-by-step examples; formula reference when appropriate; calculator when appropriate; task checklist; extra time.
Communication and language	Visual supports; simplified or repeated directions; wait time; choice boards; speech-language services when eligible.
Sensory and regulation	Movement breaks; quiet space; noise-reduction tools when appropriate; advance notice of changes; individualized regulation plan.
Social-emotional and health access	Check-in/check-out; predictable routines; counseling supports when eligible; de-escalation plan; nurse plan or medically appropriate access supports.

IEP Goals & Progress Check

A useful goal identifies the skill or behavior, how progress will be measured, and the expected level of performance. Ask for progress reports and compare progress with the plan's stated goal.

Goal or priority: _____

Starting point / baseline: _____

How progress is measured: _____

Progress report dates / notes: _____

School Communication Log

After important conversations, send a brief email summarizing the discussion and any agreed next steps. Save copies with evaluations, plans, progress reports, and meeting notes.

Date	Person / Role	How We Communicated	Topic or Request	Response / Follow-Up

Transition: High School to Adult Life

Transition planning should focus on the student's strengths, preferences, interests, and goals. In Georgia, transition planning addresses postsecondary education or training, employment, and independent living when appropriate.

Student Self-Advocacy Prompts

- My strengths and interests are: _____
- I learn best when: _____
- Supports that help me participate are: _____
- A goal I have after high school is: _____
- One question I can ask for myself is: _____

College and Career Reminder

Supports after high school work differently. Colleges generally do not identify students or create IEPs; students typically contact disability services, share appropriate documentation, and request accommodations. Encourage your student to practice explaining what helps them learn.

Georgia Parent Advocacy Resource Directory

Start with one call, one question, one next step.

- Georgia Department of Education—Special Education: parent resources, IDEA compliance, and state support.
<https://gadoe.org/special-education/>
- Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership: parent mentors and local special-education contacts.
<https://gadoe.org/special-education/georgia-parent-mentor-partnership/>
- Parent to Parent of Georgia: statewide family support, training, and referrals. 1-800-229-2038 | <https://www.p2pga.org/>
- Georgia Special Education Rules: <https://rules.sos.ga.gov/gac/160-4-7>
- Georgia DBHDD Family Support Services:
<https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/be-compassionate/home-services/family-support-services>
- Local school district: ask for the special-education director, 504 coordinator, procedural safeguards, or a written evaluation request process.

Sources

U.S. Department of Education, IDEA and regulations: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>; Georgia Department of Education, Special Education: <https://gadoe.org/special-education/>; Georgia State Board Rule 160-4-7-.04, Evaluations and Reevaluations: <https://apps.gadoe.org/sboe/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-7-.04.pdf>; U.S. Department of Education, Section 504 FAPE FAQ: <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/disability-discrimination/frequently-asked-questions-section-504-free-appropriate-public-education>

Educational resource only; not legal advice. Requirements and local procedures can change. Confirm current policies with your school district or a qualified advocate or attorney.