



TABLE 2.4 A Comparison of Key Features of IDEA and Section 504

Provision	IDEA	Section 504
Purpose	Provides a free appropriate public education to children and youth with specific disabilities.	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person's disability in all programs receiving federal funds.
Ages Covered	Individuals 3–21 years old.	No age restriction.
Definition of Disability	Twelve disabilities defined according to federal regulations plus state/local definition of <i>developmentally delayed</i> .	Broader interpretation of a disability than found in IDEA—a person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, who has a record of such impairment, or who is regarded as having such impairment.
Funding	States receive some federal dollars for excess cost of educating students with disabilities.	Because this is a civil rights law, no additional funding is provided.
Planning Documents	Individualized education program (IEP).	Accommodation plan (commonly referred to as a “504 plan”).
Assessment Provisions	A comprehensive, nondiscriminatory eligibility evaluation in all areas of suspected disability conducted by a multidisciplinary team; reevaluations every three years unless waived.	Eligibility determination requires nondiscriminatory assessment procedures; requires reevaluation prior to a “significant change” in placement.
Due Process	Extensive rights and protections afforded to student and parents.	Affords parents impartial hearing, right to inspect records, and representation by counsel. Additional protections at discretion of local school district.
Coordination	No provision.	School district required to identify a 504 coordinator.
Enforcement	U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.	Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.