

NSF Finding Health “Back-to-School 2023” 504 Plans & Navigating School

September 5, 2023

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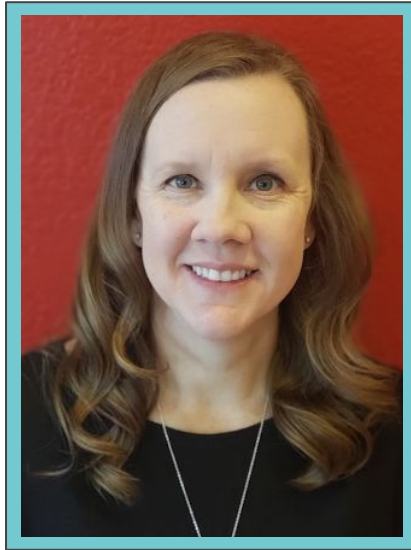
CLOSING

INTRODUCTIONS



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DISCLAIMER

- Material in this presentation based on individual experience and private research. It is designed to serve only as a general resource for awareness and discussion purposes. Information provided in this presentation should not be taken as complete, nor acted on without further verification or research.
- In addition, significant differences exist depending on country, state, school district and individual school.
- Opinions expressed in this session and on the following slides represent only those of individuals and not those of NSF, school districts, or other related institutions.

WHAT IS A 504 PLAN?

- Blueprint or plan for how the school will provide support and remove barriers for a student with a disability
- Similar to an Individual Education Plan (IEP) but focuses on accommodations and removing barriers
- Provides services and changes to the learning environment to enable students to learn alongside their peers
- Provided at no cost to families
- Governed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- A 504 Plan is technically different than a Health Care Plan but may be implemented at the same time

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- A child who has *any* disability. Section 504 covers a wide range of struggles in school. The disability must interfere with the child's ability to learn in a general education classroom.
- Section 504 has a broader definition of a disability than an IEP. (It says a disability must substantially limit one or more basic life activities. This can include learning, reading, communicating, and thinking.) That's why a child who doesn't qualify for an IEP might still be able to get a 504 plan.

WHO CREATES THE 504?

- A 504 plan is created by a team of people who are familiar with the child and who understand the evaluation data and special services options.
- This might include:
 - Child's caregiver / parent
 - School nurse, staff, counselors, and / or principal
 - General and / or special education teachers

HOW DO I INITIATE A 504?

- Just ask!
- Speak to your school nurse and / or office administration.
- A doctor's note is not required to establish a 504 plan, however, it can be helpful.
- Examples can be found on our website under 'Finding Health'.

SAMPLE DOCTORS NOTE - #1

To Whom It May Concern:

██████████ is a ██████████ with Nephrotic Syndrome which requires high dose steroids off and on for flare ups. Common side effects of high dose steroids are cognitive, lack of focus and memory issues. Please modify his school curriculum with a 504 plan, as is deemed educationally necessary to accommodate his current medical difficulties.

Please feel free to call or write if you have additional questions.
██████████

SAMPLE DOCTORS NOTE - #2

To Whom It may Concern,

██████████ has been seen in my office on 8/9/2017 for her chronic health condition of Minimal Change Nephrotic Syndrome. In returning to school, she needs the following accommodations:

- 1) no PE class for a year
- 2) may miss school more often and needs to be given time to make up her missed work
- 3) needs to be able to use the restroom as needed and may need to take bathroom breaks during class sessions
- 4) can be late for lessons due to the symptoms
- 5) needs extra time to travel between classes
- 6) should not sit near sick people as she is on immune suppressant medication

SAMPLE DOCTORS NOTE - #3

February 17, 2022

Re: [REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

[REDACTED] was diagnosed with nephrotic syndrome in September of 2021. In addition to her current steroid treatment, her disease has made it difficult for her to attend school consistently. The remainder of the school year will be the same. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Electronically signed by [REDACTED] MD 2/17/2022 12:24 PM

504 TOOLKIT

- Go to www.nephroticsyndrome.foundation.org 'For Patients / Finding Health / Past Sessions'
- Resources:
 - Sample 504 Plans
 - Sample "Meet my Child"
 - Sample "Back to School / Class Announcement"
 - Sample Doctor Notes with Justification for 504

SAMPLE 504 PLAN

- Sample only - specifics will depend on child, school and situation
- Elementary School - typically heavily focused on germ management and communication, with accommodations for missed school, etc.
- Middle School - still a focus on germ management and safety, but trends toward self-advocacy and academic accommodation
- High School - highly focused on testing and academic accommodations

“MEET MY CHILD”

- “Meet My Child” Document designed to give a short summary to those with limited time or attention
 - Short, sweet and to the point - focus on “how can you help”
 - Attaching a picture helps teachers identify your child and make a deeper connection from the start
 - Useful for ‘specials’, sibling teachers, sports coaches, troop leaders, substitutes, etc.
 - Make it one page!

“BACK TO SCHOOL / CLASS ANNOUNCEMENT”

- Example wording for use at Back-to-School Night or other in person introductions
 - Focus on communication, connection and compassion
 - Low pressure approach yielded very positive results for us!
 - Specifically state ‘non-contagious’
 - Relevant for sibling classes as well
 - Email or message sent as a follow up after meeting parents at Back-to-School Night

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Every family and warrior is unique
- Consider a team approach
- Mental health is an important consideration in this journey - The age of your warrior may impact the conversations and plans
- You may want to include the impact NS has had (steroids or otherwise) in the Health Care Plan and / or 504
- Consider a periodic check-in - There is a lot that happens at home “behind the scenes”

OTHER TOOLS, STEPS & TIPS

- Chronic illness form / Truancy conversation with Dr.'s note
- High-Schoolers - pre-format email for when not feeling well
- Specific letter sent to classmates / grade-level about immunosuppressed child and importance of school illness policy
- In-person meeting with teachers extremely beneficial
- Education - World Kidney Day - Thursday, March 14th, 2024
- Work with your team!

Q&A

- Does a 504 include dietary restrictions?
- How do I address frequent absences in advance?
- How can I partner with school/ teachers in middle school to help keep my child safe?
- Do you have any tips on helping our warriors be able to talk about their condition, or a response, if asked WHY they're wearing a mask at school or other applicable activities?
- My child lives in two homes (blended family). Anything unique I should add to the 504?
- Open Q&A

CLOSING & WRAP UP

- Finding Health Sessions
 - **Peer Team Panel - “What Parents Need to Know”**
 - Tuesday, September 19th @ 5:30pm PST
 - **“Vaccinations and Nephrotic Syndrome”**
 - Tuesday, September 26th @ 5:30pm PST
- Backpacks of Hope
 - **Now accepting requests - Please submit by 9/22**
 - B.Hope Day - Saturday, October 7th
- NSF Peer Team
 - **Fall CONNECTIONS Event**
 - Saturday, October 14th @ 10am PST

CLOSING & WRAP UP

- Thank you!
- Feedback and suggestions welcome - email us!
dana@nephroticsyndrome.foundation.org or
andi@nephroticsyndrome.foundation.org
- Requests or suggestions for future Finding Health topics?

Thank you for being here!
Your involvement & participation helps all of us!

