

A GUIDE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERS

Families as Partners

Reducing Risk in IEP and 504 Planning

What recent state complaint, hearing and OCR decisions show about where family trust breaks down, and the practices and regulations that keep ordinary disagreements from becoming filings.

Where does your district stand?

Answer each question for your district as it runs today. Any question you answer "Partly" or "No" points to the section to read first.

#	QUESTION	YES / PARTLY / NO	READ FIRST
1	Do you know how many due process complaints, state complaints and settlements your district had in the last three years, and what they cost?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	What an adversarial relationship costs
2	When a parent asks for an evaluation, does the family always get either a consent form or a written refusal, along with the procedural safeguards?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Building trust early: first contact
3	Can you show that every initial evaluation in the last year met the federal or state timeline?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Building trust early: first contact
4	Are IEP meeting times agreed with the family, with a phone or video option when they cannot attend in person?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Building trust early: before the meeting
5	For any meeting held without a parent this year, can you produce the record of attempts to schedule it?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Where trust breaks; Building trust early
6	Do families receive evaluation data and drafts before the meeting?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Building trust early: before the meeting
7	Do your IEPs record the parents' concerns in their own words, with the team's response to each?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Building trust early: in the meeting
8	Does every refused parent request get a prior written notice the family can read?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Where trust breaks; Building trust early: after the meeting
9	Are records requests filled before the next meeting and within 45 days?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Where trust breaks
10	Is each family's preferred language recorded, and is a qualified interpreter, never a family member or child, booked for every meeting that needs one?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	Where trust breaks: language access
11	Are parents invited to 504 meetings, and can you show how they received the plan and the procedural safeguards?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	What changes for 504 plans
12	Do case managers know how to request state IEP facilitation, and do families hear about it before a disagreement grows?	☐ Y ☐ P ☐ N	When disagreement starts

01 Why this guide

Written state complaints under IDEA reached 9,927 in 2023-24, a 22% jump over the year before. Mediation requests reached 12,914, the most on record at the time. Both figures come from [CADRE's national trends report](#).

Most of those disputes did not start with a lawsuit. They started with a missed phone call, a meeting held on the wrong day, a request that never got a written answer, or a notice the parent could not read. The state complaint and hearing decisions in this guide show the same pattern. The finding often turns on how the district treated the family before anyone filed anything.

This guide is for special education directors, coordinators and case managers in K12 school districts and charter networks. It covers IEP and 504 plan development, and it treats the family as a partner in both. It walks through:

- What adversarial disputes cost a district in hearings, settlements and private placement
- Where trust breaks down, using recent state complaint, hearing and OCR decisions

- Practices that build trust from the first evaluation meeting onward, tied to the regulations that require them
- What changes for 504 plans
- The options available once a disagreement starts, before it becomes a filing

Each section ends with a self-check you can run against your own district. A one-page checklist at the end pulls them together for a team meeting. A companion guide, *What the Record Shows*, covers service logs, progress reports, notices and what happens when a placement is challenged.

A note on scope. Strong family partnership will not prevent every dispute, and it will not prevent placements driven by a gap in the district's programs. What it does is keep ordinary disagreements from escalating, and it determines how the district's conduct reads when a hearing officer reviews the record.

02 What an adversarial relationship costs

When a family stops trusting the IEP team, the cost shows up in three places: legal fees, settlements and private placement.

Due process and legal fees

Due process complaints nationally reached 39,151 in 2023-24, according to [CADRE's data summary](#). New York alone accounted for about 68% of them, so the national number overstates the volume in most states. The trend outside New York still points up: filings rose about 5% (CADRE).

Legal fees accrue whether the district wins or loses. In Georgia, Gwinnett County spent more than \$720,000 on legal fees for due process proceedings between January 2023 and February 2026, not counting settlements. Fayette County spent more than \$343,000 over three years. Due process proceedings in Georgia rose from 73 in 2021 to 176 in 2025 ([Atlanta News First](#), Sept. 9, 2026).

If the parent prevails, a court may also award the parent reasonable attorneys' fees (34 CFR 300.517(a)(1)(i)). The award is discretionary, but districts have to plan for it.

Settlements

Many districts settle cases they could win. In AASA's national survey of superintendents, 56% said they settled to avoid creating or continuing an adversarial relationship with a parent. The same report cites studies of placement cases from the mid-1990s in which districts prevailed 71% of the time ([AASA, Rethinking the Special Education Due Process System](#), pp. 14 and 17, n. 57). The survey dates to 2012, but it remains one of the few national surveys on why districts settle.

Settlements are large and usually confidential. The Philadelphia Inquirer requested settlement records from all 62 districts in the four suburban counties around Philadelphia, and 24 denied the requests (Aug. 5, 2025):

DISTRICT	WHAT THE INQUIRER REPORTED
Pennsbury	\$767,000 for one student to attend a private school over five years. Three other agreements ranged from \$300,000 to \$400,000.
Council Rock	Settlement costs over \$2 million in 2023, plus more than \$256,000 in legal fees
Coatesville	18 settlements costing \$460,000 over three years
Unionville-Chadds Ford	\$121,000 for a residential treatment school in Utah and \$200,000 for a boarding school in Connecticut

The agreements covered compensatory education, private school tuition, out-of-state placements and some attorneys' fees. Districts keep the terms private through confidentiality provisions that bar parents from disclosing them.

Out-of-district placement

Out-of-district placement costs are largest in the Northeast. Massachusetts spent more than \$1.1 billion on out-of-district placements in one fiscal year and placed 6% of its special education students

out of district in 2022-23, compared with 2% in California and under 1% in Texas ([Boston Globe](#), Apr. 18, 2024).

This guide does not claim that family partnership prevents placements. When a student needs a program the district does not offer, better communication will not close that gap. It does affect two things a director controls. It decides whether a disagreement about services turns into a unilateral placement, and it decides whether a family will agree to bring a student back once the district builds the program. A placement change requires a group that includes the parent (34 [CFR 300.501\(c\)](#)), so a return depends on the family's trust.

When parents believe the district has not offered an appropriate program, IDEA allows them to place their child privately and seek reimbursement (34 [CFR 300.148](#)). The companion guide, *What the Record Shows*, covers the legal test and what the district's records need to show when a placement is challenged.

SELF-CHECK

- ☐ How many due process complaints, state complaints and settlements did your district have in the last three school years? What did they cost in fees and payments combined?
- ☐ For each one, can you name the first point where the family's concern was raised and how the team responded in writing?

03 Where trust breaks: what the decisions show

The decisions below come from 2026 Connecticut state complaints, federal appeals courts and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Connecticut publishes summaries of every state complaint decision, which makes it a useful window into patterns that appear in every state. In each case, the finding turned on how the district handled the family.

Meeting without the parent

In [Doug C. v. Hawaii Department of Education](#) (9th Cir. 2013), the father was sick and asked to reschedule the annual IEP meeting. The district held it without him to meet the annual deadline and changed his son's placement. The court held that excluding a parent who is actively trying to attend denies FAPE, and that the deadline did not justify it. A follow-up meeting after the IEP was finished did not cure the violation.

New Haven made the same choice in November 2025. The district held a planning and placement team (PPT) meeting knowing the parent could not attend and did not reschedule. The state found four violations. The meeting violated parent participation rules. The IEP went out late. The prior written notices were built from a draft IEP, and the district waived the 10-day notice without her consent. The goals did not reflect the most recent reevaluation, and with the parent absent, her concerns never reached the team ([CT 26-0660, July 10, 2026](#)).

Deciding before the meeting

In [Deal v. Hamilton County Board of Education](#) (6th Cir. 2004), the facts strongly suggested the district had an unofficial policy against offering one-to-one

ABA and would not discuss the parents' proposed program. The parents attended the meetings and gave their views. The court held that participation "must be more than a mere form; it must be meaningful," and found the district had predetermined the outcome.

A quieter version appears in Bethel. Before a manifestation determination meeting, district staff reviewed the relevant documents but did not review them with the parent. At the meeting they referred to a behavior rating scale without going over its scores. The state found a violation and ordered training for the team ([CT 26-0369, March 17, 2026](#)).

Staff can prepare. The regulations say preparatory work and draft proposals are not meetings (34 CFR [300.501\(b\)\(3\)](#)). The line is crossed when the decision is closed before the family sees the data.

Shortcuts on notice and consent

In Groton, a scheduled 504 meeting was converted to an IDEA PPT on the day it was held. Messages went to the parent through ParentSquare less than two hours beforehand. She said she would not waive her right to five days' notice. The state found the district failed to give the parent prior notice of the meeting. The district had also started a trial placement in a self-contained class eight days before the parent consented to placement ([CT 26-0524, May 15, 2026](#)). The parent's positive comments about the class did not count as consent.

Requests with no written answer

Several of the 2026 Connecticut decisions turn on a parent request that got a verbal "no" or no answer at all.

DECISION	WHAT THE PARENT ASKED FOR	WHAT THE STATE FOUND
Vernon 26-0387, Mar. 2026	Special transportation, raised more than once. Between November and January the parent and a DCF social worker asked three times for a prior written notice.	No prior written notice refusing it, the request not fully considered, and the IEP sent 8 school days after the meeting. The parent's email on file was out of date.
East Lyme 26-0662, July 2026	Copies of the student's records	Records only partly provided. The parent did not get five school days' notice that a speech therapist would attend the PPT.

IDEA requires written notice whenever the district refuses to change identification, evaluation, placement or services (34 CFR 300.503(a)). Parents have the right to see records without unnecessary delay, before any IEP meeting or hearing, and within 45 days at most (34 CFR 300.613).

The counterexample is useful. In Branford, the state found no violation. It still recommended that the team discuss accommodation changes openly at the meeting and consider documenting every IEP change in prior written notice (CT 26-0436, Apr. 6, 2026).

Language access

OCR's 2020 letter to Livermore Valley Joint Unified School District in California described a Spanish-speaking parent who did not receive complete Spanish versions of her child's November 2019 IEP and February 2020 amendment until July 2020. The district had no written guidance telling parents how to request an interpreter, and it translated IEP documents only when a parent asked. The district signed a resolution agreement that requires a decision on whether the student is owed compensatory services, written guidance on requesting interpreters and translations, and a Spanish communication protocol for the family (OCR 09-20-1341 letter; agreement).

In Charleston County, South Carolina, the U.S. Department of Justice found the district often failed to use qualified interpreters and did not explain the

options for important decisions about school programs and services to Spanish-speaking parents in a language they understood. The settlement requires the district to tell families with limited English proficiency, before each special education meeting, that they have a right to a free interpreter and translated documents (DOJ press release, Mar. 2, 2021).

The IDEA requirements are specific. Interpreters at IEP meetings for parents who are deaf or whose native language is not English (34 CFR 300.322(e)). Prior written notice in the parent's native language unless clearly not feasible (34 CFR 300.503(c)). Consent that is informed in the parent's native language (34 CFR 300.9). The 2015 ED and DOJ guidance on communicating with parents with limited English proficiency was rescinded in 2025, but the regulations it pointed to still apply (Chalkbeat, Aug. 20, 2025).

SELF-CHECK

- ☐ In the last year, how many IEP meetings went ahead without a parent? For each, can you show the attempts to reschedule?
- ☐ Pull three parent requests that were refused. Is there a prior written notice for each?
- ☐ For families whose home language is not English, which documents in the file exist only in English?

04 Building trust early in IEP planning

Trust is built in routine moments: how a meeting is scheduled, whether the family sees the data before decisions are made, and whether a request gets a written answer. Each practice below is tied to the regulation that already requires it.

CADRE puts it plainly in its guidance on prevention: "Perhaps the best and easiest way to manage conflict is to prevent it in the first place" ([CADRE, Stage I](#)).

First contact: referral and evaluation

For many families, the first interaction with special education is a request for an evaluation. How the district handles that request sets the tone for everything after it.

A parent can request an initial evaluation ([34 CFR 300.301\(b\)](#)). The district must give the family the procedural safeguards notice at that point ([300.504\(a\)\(1\)](#)). If the district agrees to evaluate, it needs informed written consent ([300.300\(a\)](#)) and must finish within 60 days of consent or the state's own timeline ([300.301\(c\)\(1\)](#)). A refusal to evaluate is a refusal to initiate an evaluation, which calls for prior written notice ([300.503\(a\)\(2\)](#)).

Three 2026 Connecticut decisions show where this goes wrong.

- In a New Haven charter school case, the parent referred her child in March 2025. The team saw no reason to suspect a disability, though the student was performing well below peers on every benchmark assessment. The state found the district had enough information in March to suspect a disability. It ordered 44 hours of compensatory education for this and a second violation, with the plan developed with input from the parent and her attorney ([CT 26-0506, May 18, 2026](#)).
- In Greenwich, the team declined to evaluate a referred student and cited attendance problems as the reason. The state found a child find violation,

ordered a PPT to plan a full initial evaluation, and required child find training for every school-employed PPT member ([CT 26-0753, July 21, 2026](#)).

- In Groton, the parent consented to an evaluation on February 27, 2026. The team did not meet to review it until June 3, well past Connecticut's 45-school-day timeline. The parent's attorney had acknowledged the district would likely reschedule a May meeting, and the parent appeared to agree. The state was clear: "the parties cannot agree to extend a timeline that is legally required" ([CT 26-0675, July 6, 2026](#)).

A "no" can hold up. In Ridgefield, a parent submitted written requests for an evaluation more than once and the district declined. The state found no violation because the district processed the referral, convened a PPT and determined from data that an evaluation was not warranted ([CT 26-0279, Jan. 13, 2026](#)). The family got a meeting and a decision grounded in data, even though it was not the one they asked for.

Before the meeting

Schedule with the family. IDEA requires the district to schedule IEP meetings at a mutually agreed time and place and to notify parents early enough to attend ([34 CFR 300.322\(a\)](#)). If a parent cannot attend in person, offer a phone or video option ([300.322\(c\)](#)). A meeting can go ahead without the parent only when the district could not convince them to attend, and the district has to keep records of its attempts, such as calls, letters and visits ([300.322\(d\)](#)). Doug C. shows that an approaching annual deadline does not change this.

Tell the family what the meeting is for. The meeting notice has to state the purpose, time, location and who will attend ([300.322\(b\)](#)). Naming any proposed change in the notice gives the family time to prepare questions instead of reacting in the room.

Share data and drafts before the meeting, labeled as drafts. Staff can prepare proposals ahead of time (300.501(b)(3)). Sending evaluation results and a draft to the family a few days ahead lets them come ready to discuss them. The Bethel decision shows the risk of reviewing data among staff and never walking the parent through it.

Arrange language access in advance. Ask about the family's preferred language at intake and record it. Book a qualified interpreter for every meeting where one is needed (300.322(e)). OCR's 2022 resolution agreement with Dayton City Schools in Ohio is a useful model. It requires interpreters who know special education terms, calls using family members as interpreters generally not acceptable and using children never advisable, and requires translated procedural safeguards and eligibility and placement documents (OCR 15-21-1023).

In the meeting

Record the family's concerns. The IEP team must consider the parents' concerns for enhancing their child's education (34 CFR 300.324(a)(1)(ii)). Write them into the IEP in the family's words, and note how the team responded to each one. In New Haven, the parent was not in the room, so her concerns never reached the team.

Keep options open. A blanket rule such as "we don't offer that service" is evidence of predetermination (Deal). Discuss each option the family raises, and record why the team accepted or rejected it.

Explain the procedural safeguards in plain language. Districts must give parents the procedural safeguards notice once a year and at key points such as an initial referral or a first complaint (34 CFR 300.504). Handing over the document is the minimum. In East Lyme, the state found a violation when the notice about mediation was handed to the parent but not read aloud at the end of the first PPT meeting of the year, as Connecticut law requires (CT 26-0662).

After the meeting

Send the IEP promptly. The parent gets a copy of the IEP at no cost (300.322(f)). Many states set a deadline. Connecticut requires the IEP within five school days of the meeting, and late IEPs appear in both the New Haven and Vernon decisions.

Answer every request in writing. When the district refuses a parent's request to change identification, evaluation, placement or services, it must issue prior written notice (34 CFR 300.503(a)). The notice has to be written so the general public can understand it, in the parent's native language unless clearly not feasible (300.503(c)). For the family, the notice is proof the team heard the request and weighed it. A verbal "no" leaves them nothing to read and a reason to escalate. The companion guide, *What the Record Shows*, covers what a defensible notice contains.

Respond to an evaluation disagreement. A parent who disagrees with the district's evaluation can request an independent educational evaluation at public expense. The district must either pay for it or file for due process without unnecessary delay (34 CFR 300.502(b)). An IEE request usually means the family no longer trusts the district's evaluation. Treat it as information about what the family does not yet believe. Consider the independent results when they arrive, and walk through them with the family (300.502(c)).

SELF-CHECK

- ☐ For the last ten IEP meetings, was the time agreed with the family, and did the family receive data or drafts in advance?
- ☐ Do your IEPs record the parents' concerns in their own words, with the team's response?
- ☐ When a parent asks for an evaluation, how long until the family gets either a consent form or a written refusal?

05 What changes for 504 plans

Section 504 has fewer procedural rules than IDEA, which makes family involvement easier to skip and harder to defend later.

The Section 504 regulations require that placement decisions be made by a group of people who know the child, the meaning of the evaluation data and the placement options (34 CFR 104.35(c)(3)). Neither the regulation nor OCR's resource guide lists parents as required members of that group. OCR still urges schools to involve parents. Its guide urges schools to allow parental participation when considering any change to a student's 504 plan, calls it beneficial to involve parents in evaluation, and states that OCR reads Section 504 to require informed parental consent for an initial evaluation (OCR, [Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504](#), Dec. 2016, pp. 20 to 21).

Districts also need a system of procedural safeguards for 504. It has to include notice, a chance for parents to examine relevant records, an impartial hearing with parent participation and the right to counsel, and a review procedure (34 CFR 104.36).

An OCR case shows where 504 practice tends to break down.

A conversation replaces a meeting. In Broward County, Florida, a teacher-parent conference was held in place of a 504 meeting. The plan was not

updated when the student moved to middle school, and the parent said she had not known about the accommodations for three years. The district entered a voluntary resolution agreement (OCR 04-19-1446, Dec. 2019).

The Groton decision adds a second risk. When a 504 meeting turns into an IDEA meeting, IDEA's notice and consent rules apply in full (CT 26-0524). If a team expects that discussion, schedule it as an IEP meeting with proper notice.

The practices in the IEP section carry over to 504. Invite the family to the meeting. Send the plan and the procedural safeguards in a way you can document. Tell the family in writing when the plan changes.

SELF-CHECK

- ☐ Were the parents invited to the most recent 504 meeting for each student, and can you show how they received the plan?
- ☐ When a student changes schools within the district, who confirms the 504 plan moved with them and the family knows it is in place?
- ☐ When a student is found ineligible under IDEA, does the team document that it considered Section 504?

06 When disagreement starts

A disagreement is not yet a dispute. The earlier the district responds, the more options it has.

CADRE, the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education, maps the options as a continuum with five stages ([CADRE Continuum](#)):

1. Prevention. Family engagement and training, which CADRE lists among its prevention practices.
2. Disagreement. Parent-to-parent assistance, a case manager or a telephone intermediary.
3. Conflict. Facilitation, mediation outside the IDEA process, an ombudsperson or a third-party opinion.
4. Procedural safeguards. Resolution meetings, IDEA mediation, written state complaints and due process hearings.
5. Legal review. Appeals of hearing decisions and litigation.

Most of this guide sits in stages 1 and 2. The tools below sit in stages 3 and 4.

IEP facilitation

Facilitation is voluntary. A neutral facilitator runs the IEP meeting when the family and the district agree that a third party would help communication and problem solving ([CADRE, Stage III](#)). CADRE describes it as an upstream process that can resolve disputes quickly and lower the chance of a formal proceeding ([CADRE facilitation guide](#)).

Rhode Island's program shows what that looks like in practice. In 2024-25 the state received 99 formal requests for IEP meeting facilitation. It held 44 facilitated meetings, which resulted in full or partial agreement between families and districts, and

another 39 requests were withdrawn, often after informal resolution led by the facilitator. Across all 129 requests since March 2024, 9% of cases that went through a facilitated meeting moved on to formal dispute resolution. Where one side declined facilitation, 40% did ([RIDE, FIEP Annual Report, Sept. 2025](#)). North Carolina data from 2008-09 show facilitated meetings reaching consensus on all issues 70% of the time ([AASA, p. 20](#)).

Several states offer facilitation free to both families and districts, including Rhode Island, Texas ([TEA](#)) and Maine ([Maine DOE, Feb. 2022](#)). Find out what your state offers before you need it, and tell families about it while the disagreement is still small.

Mediation

IDEA mediation is voluntary and confidential, and the state bears the cost. It cannot be used to deny or delay a due process hearing. An agreement reached in mediation is written, legally binding and enforceable in court (34 CFR 300.506). Mediations not related to a due process complaint reached agreement about 70% of the time nationally in 2023-24. Across all mediations, the agreement rate was 50% ([CADRE trends report](#)).

Resolution meeting

After a parent files for due process, the district must convene a resolution meeting within 15 days unless both sides waive it in writing or agree to mediation. The parties have 30 days to resolve the complaint before a hearing timeline starts. A written settlement from that meeting is binding, and either party can void it within three business days (34 CFR 300.510). Treat the resolution meeting as a working meeting with decision makers present.

PROCESS, 2023-24 NATIONAL DATA	HELD	AGREEMENTS
Resolution meetings	5,852	1,623 written settlements
Mediations	7,085	3,555

Source: [CADRE IDEA Dispute Resolution Data Summary](#).

State complaints and due process

A state complaint can be filed by anyone. It must allege a violation within the past year, and the state has 60 days to investigate and issue a written decision (34 CFR 300.152, 300.153). Due process complaints have a two-year limit unless the state sets its own (34 CFR 300.507(a)(2)). In both forums, the record of how the district handled the family is evidence.

SELF-CHECK

- ☐ Does your state offer IEP facilitation, and do your case managers know how to request it?
- ☐ Who attends resolution meetings for your district, and can that person agree to a settlement on the spot?
- ☐ For any family that has raised a placement concern this year, can you produce the procedural safeguards notice they received and every written response the district sent?

Team checklist

Print this page for a team meeting. Each item maps to a section above.

FIRST CONTACT

- ☐ A parent's request for evaluation gets a consent form or a prior written notice, with the procedural safeguards
- ☐ Initial evaluations are tracked against the federal or state timeline, and the timeline is never extended by agreement

SCHEDULING AND PARTICIPATION

- ☐ IEP meeting times are agreed with the family, and phone or video is offered when they cannot attend in person
- ☐ Every meeting held without a parent has a record of the attempts to schedule it
- ☐ Meeting notices name the purpose and any proposed change

BEFORE AND DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ Families receive evaluation results and drafts, labeled as drafts, before the meeting
- ☐ Staff walk the family through the data in the meeting
- ☐ The IEP records the parents' concerns in their words and the team's response to each
- ☐ Options the family raises are discussed, with the reason each was accepted or rejected

NOTICE AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

- ☐ The IEP reaches the family within your state's deadline
- ☐ Every refused parent request gets a prior written notice the family can read
- ☐ Records requests are filled before the next meeting and within 45 days

LANGUAGE ACCESS

- ☐ The family's preferred language is recorded at intake
- ☐ A qualified interpreter is booked for every meeting that needs one, rather than relying on a family member or child
- ☐ Notices, consents and progress reports are provided in the family's language

504 PLANS

- ☐ Parents are invited to 504 meetings, and the plan and safeguards are sent in a way you can document
- ☐ 504 plans follow students who change schools, and the family is told
- ☐ A finding of IDEA ineligibility includes documented consideration of Section 504

EARLY RESOLUTION

- ☐ Families hear about state IEP facilitation while a disagreement is still small
- ☐ Case managers know how to request facilitation or mediation through the state
- ☐ A person with settlement authority attends resolution meetings

Sources

REGULATIONS

- IDEA regulations, 34 CFR Part 300: [300.9](#), [300.148](#), [300.152](#), [300.153](#), [300.300](#), [300.301](#), [300.322](#), [300.324](#), [300.501](#), [300.502](#), [300.503](#), [300.504](#), [300.506](#), [300.507](#), [300.510](#), [300.517](#), [300.613](#)
- Section 504 regulations, 34 CFR Part 104: [104.35](#), [104.36](#)

FEDERAL APPEALS COURTS

- [Deal v. Hamilton County Board of Education](#), 392 F.3d 840 (6th Cir. 2004)
- [Doug C. v. Hawaii Department of Education](#), 720 F.3d 1038 (9th Cir. 2013)

CONNECTICUT STATE COMPLAINT DECISIONS, 2026

- Bethel 26-0369, Branford 26-0436, East Lyme 26-0662, Greenwich 26-0753, Groton 26-0524, Groton 26-0675, New Haven 26-0660, New Haven charter school 26-0506, Ridgefield 26-0279, Vernon 26-0387

OCR AND DOJ

- [OCR 09-20-1341](#), Livermore Valley JUSD, letter and resolution agreement
- [OCR 15-21-1023](#), Dayton City SD, resolution agreement
- [OCR 04-19-1446](#), Broward County Public Schools
- [OCR, Parent and Educator Resource Guide to Section 504](#) (Dec. 2016)

- [DOJ, Charleston County School District settlement](#) (Mar. 2, 2021)

DATA AND REPORTING

- [CADRE, IDEA Dispute Resolution Data Summary, 2013-14 to 2023-24](#)
- [CADRE, Trends in Dispute Resolution under the IDEA, 2023-24](#)
- [CADRE Continuum, Stage I: Prevention, Stage III and facilitation guide](#)
- [Rhode Island Department of Education, Facilitated IEP Annual Report](#) (Sept. 2025)
- [Texas Education Agency, IEP facilitation](#)
- [Maine DOE, IEP facilitation at no cost](#) (Feb. 16, 2022)
- [AASA, Rethinking the Special Education Due Process System](#) (2013)
- [Philadelphia Inquirer, "Secretive special education settlements are costing school districts millions"](#) (Aug. 5, 2025)
- [Boston Globe, Massachusetts out-of-district placements](#) (Apr. 18, 2024)
- [Atlanta News First, Georgia district legal spending on due process](#) (Sept. 9, 2026)
- [Chalkbeat, rescission of English learner guidance](#) (Aug. 20, 2025)

This guide summarizes public decisions and regulations. It is not legal advice. Consult district counsel on specific cases.

August Schools keeps the work this guide describes in one student record: IEPs, 504 plans, service logs, signature requests and family communication.

When a parent asks for an evaluation, the consent form goes out through the August family portal and comes back to the student record. Families sign in with a magic link, so there's no password to set up and no app to download.

When it's time to write the plan, case managers can use August Intelligence to draft present levels, goals and service minutes from the evaluation report. They review and edit every draft before the meeting.

After the meeting, providers log sessions against specific IEP goals, so progress on each goal stays current. Progress updates and notices go to families in their home language.

Every message to and from a family is saved to the student record. Staff notes are timestamped and show who wrote them. When a family asks what the district sent and when, the answer is in one place.

Families can also text questions to a single phone number and get answers in their own language, at any hour. Urgent messages are routed to staff right away.

CASE CONFERENCE · PROVIDENCE

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