



- **Train teacher to understand role in meeting**
- **Talk to teacher about questions, concerns before meeting**
- **Address teacher directly in meeting**

Prepare gen ed teachers to attend, participate in 504 meetings

General education teachers may not be as accustomed to the idea of attending students' [Section 504](#) meetings as their special ed peers.

"I often find that the gen ed teacher is very intimidated," said Dona Foster, supervisor of student supports and district 504 coordinator for [Carroll County Public Schools](#) in Westminster, Md. "They will be the first to tell you that they 'are not special ed!'"

Here are a few things you can do to help them feel comfortable:

- **Explain the teacher's role in the meeting.** Make it clear to the teacher why she, specifically, was selected to attend the meeting, as opposed to someone else, said Linda Yoder, a school attorney with [Shipman & Goodwin LLP](#) in Hartford, Conn. "Explain their role. Explain [that] this is their seat [at] the table." Tell the teacher that this is her chance to speak up if someone recommends an accommodation that won't work with her particular class, and suggest an alternative that will.

"Every meeting has an agenda," Foster said. "Every player has a role. I train [teachers] to understand what their role in the meeting is. This helps build continuity, consistency, and empowers the educator to feel like they have resourceful input."

- **Give the teacher information ahead of time.** Take the time to talk to the teacher before the meeting, Yoder said. Ask her if she has any questions or concerns that she'd like to discuss prior to the meeting.

Give the teacher sufficient information about the student, so she can come to the meeting ready with ideas to discuss, Yoder said. "Have them do their homework and prepare," she said. "I think it would really make those meetings much more productive and meaningful for everybody."

For example, if the student uses a wheelchair, and the way the teacher's classroom is configured cannot accommodate a wheelchair, encourage the teacher to speak with someone before the meeting about it. They can look and decide if there's another way to do it, then come to the meeting with ideas, Yoder said.

- **Talk about the difference between Section 504 and the IDEA.** Ask the teacher if he understands the difference between 504 and IDEA, and what Section 504 is all about, Yoder said. "Explain it's an access and discrimination statute," she said. If the teacher is reluctant to participate in the meeting, be clear in explaining to him that if he doesn't follow the student's 504 plan, he could have personal liability for

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discrimination, and both he and the district could be sued. This meeting is his opportunity to shape the plan so it's reasonable to carry out in his classroom.

- **Direct specific questions to the teacher.** During the meeting, structure questions for the gen ed teacher, Foster said. For example, "Ms. English teacher, please share with us ways in which you see Sally as being substantially limited in the educational environment. Which barriers may need to be removed in order for her to have equal access to her education?"

See also:

- [Emphasize general educators' role in 504 referrals, evaluations](#)
- [Successful 504 meetings: Best practices for before, during, and after](#)
- [Chart: Section 504 Team Meeting Log](#)

[Florence Simmons](#) covers Section 504, paraprofessionals, and transportation for LRP Publications.

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