SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO HELP CHILDREN WITH ADHD:
(FREE AND APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION PAMPHLET (FAPE)).

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html

Q: What is FAPE?
A: It stands for Free and Appropriate education and children with disabilities are allowed to have FAPE through IDEA (see below).

Q: What is IDEA?
A: It stands for Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and it says that each child who has 1 of 13 disabilities and needs special education and related services will receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

Q: How do i find out if my child is eligible for special education?
A: Ask your school to evaluate your child (formal letter or call principal). State that you think your child has a disability and you would like him or her to be evaluated as soon as possible (letter from your child’s therapist with a diagnosis will help here).

Q: Can the school refuse to evaluate my child for special education?
A: Yes if they don’t feel their is a problem but they must state the reason in writing to you. Ask your school for the special education policies and the parent rights.

Q: What are the steps in the special education process?
A: Identification, Request for an Evaluation, Evaluation, Eligibility for Special Education, Individualized Educational Program (IEP), Re-evaluation (every 3 years and eligibility must be established again and not automatically guaranteed.)
Q: What is a 504 plan and how does my child become eligible for it?
A: Civil Rights Law which came from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Does NOT require specialized instruction (accommodations). The disability can be a mental or physical impairment that “substantially limits one or more major life activities.” Learning is considered a major life activity.

Q: What are the requirements to get a 504 (Two of them).
A: (1) A child has any disability, which can include many learning or attention issues. (2) 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 IDEA. (It says a disability must substantially limit one or more basic life activities, such as learning.)

Q: How do most kids with ADHD get accommodations through the school district?
A: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance, including federal funds. Section 504 provides that: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Q: When should i ask for a 504 or IEP?
A: As soon as a diagnosis of ADHD is being considered by your child’s therapist because you need to “start the clock.”

What will increase my chances of getting a 504 or IEP for my child?
A: (1) Ask for a reasonable number of accommodations. (2) Have both parents (where applicable) show up to the meeting. Research “say a male.”
Q: What laws allow me to get help for my child’s ADHD?
A: There are two laws governing special services and accommodations for children with disabilities: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. All schools receiving federal funding are required to provide services under Section 504, but IDEA applies to all students, even those in private schools that do not receive federal funding. Children with ADHD often receive services under Section 504 because the requirements are less stringent than for IDEA.

Q: What categories of disabilities would allow my child to get help in an IEP (under IDEA)?
A: There are 13 specific categories of disabilities but the disability must also have “adverse impact” in the classroom.

9. Other Health Impaired (ADHD is covered in this category) 10. Specific learning disability.

Q: I think my child needs an IEP for his ADHD but what category would ADHD be?
A: ADHD falls into the classification of Other Health Impaired (OHI). Because IDEA is very specific, children who have been diagnosed with ADHD only are often denied services under this law.
Q: How can my child with ADHD be made eligible for an IEP?
A: if your child has another mental health challenge (comorbid issue like a learning disability or emotional disturbance or any of the other 13 disabilities) or if your child’s ADHD is so severe it causes major impairment, he or she would have more of a chance to qualify for IDEA.

Q: What are the two general purpose of an IEP?
A: To set reasonable learning goals for your child and to state the services that the school district will provide your child

Q: What is the difference between an IEP and 504.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9TgDgHfd1Y
*They are governed by different laws (IDEA vs Section 504).
IEP: is governed by Special Education Law from IDEA.
504: is governed by Civil Rights Law.
*Different ways to qualify for an IEP vs 504.
IEP: your child must have 1 of 13 listed disabilities and it must interfere with their learning or their performance in the classroom. It must have an “adverse educational impact” in the classroom for how your child is learning.
504: Child needs to have a disability that interferes with learning in the general education classroom. You just make changes to the learning environment also called an “accommodation.” The changes don’t require specialized instruction. If well written and everyone working on it and aware of it and follows through then it can be just as effective as an IEP.
504: Deal with accommodations
IEP: Deal more with modification of the curriculum and often involve special education services outside of the classroom. IEP’s can change the curriculum while 504’s don’t. Both an IEP and a 504 Plan are binding legal documents.
IEP: Test the child every three years.
**504**: No educational testing usually.

**IEP**: Specific definition of a disability.

**504**: Broader definition of a disability (does not have to be 1 of the 13 disabilities). 504’s offer fewer protections than IEPs but require less extensive documentation.

**IEP**’s: Tend to be long formal documents. Includes goals.

**504**: Can be 1-2 pages long and less formal. Does not include goals usually.

**504 Warning**: Requires a lot of parental involvement to ensure follow through with plan.

**Q**: Where can I see a side by side comparison of an IEP and 504?


**Q**: Where can I find more information in San Francisco about IEP’s and 504’s?


**Q**: What is the number for SFUSD Special Education Office?

**A**: 415-759-2222 (information in 3 different languages). (Elementary, Middle, HS Special Ed Information including assessments).

**Q**: How do I get an advocate for help for my child in dealing with the school?


You may also want to contact a parent support or advocacy organization. Organizations in San Francisco include:

- Special Education Community Advisory Committee (CAC) • 920-5040
- Support for Families of Children with Disabilities • 282-7494 or 920-5040
Q: What are some of the signs my child may have a learning disability?
A: http://ldonline.org/ldbasics (From SFUSD website).

Q: How does this all apply to college and graduate school?
A: https://www.mastersdegree.net/students-with-disabilities/

Q: What are the special education rights and responsibilities in the entire IEP process.

Accommodations and key points to keep in mind for helping your child at his or her school:

1. Request in writing an IEP or 504 (see above). Ask your child’s therapist for a sample letter. See below for a sample IEP letter.

2. Private schools do not need to honor a 504 but they usually are willing to provide suggested accommodations but don’t have to because they do not get their funding from the federal government.

3. Stay involved with your child’s academics through school loop, emailing and contacting the teacher.

4. Give your child advance warning for upcoming transitions, events, and long assignments.

5. Have your child take a picture of his or her homework if they have a phone.

6. Record lecture and play back at your own leisure.

7. Consider using a Smart Pen.

8. Ask the teacher for a copy of his or her notes.
9. For younger children, use a parent child communication card about specific targeted behaviors to address with your child. Have this card go back and forth daily or weekly between you and the teacher.

10. Use a behavioral plan that you vary such as a sticker chart, purchasing an item your child is wanting, etc. Vary the rewards as even rewards can become boring.

11. Make sure your child does not skip breakfast or lunch. Some kids skip lunch for recess. Make rule with your child’s teacher that if he or she does not eat lunch then they get no recess. No lunch, no recess!

12. Talk to your child’s psychiatrist (MD) to see if your child may need a booster pill to get his or her homework done when the medication wears off.

13. **When your child has a diagnosis of ADHD, write a letter with your child’s therapist (and child if appropriate). Include in this letter the diagnosis and suggested accommodations. This helps you stay one step ahead in the process and impresses the school. They often defer to the letter when making a plan.**

14. Remember, Kaiser typically does not do psycho-educational testing (the school district does this).

15. When you do meet with the school for any type of educational planning meeting (IEP, 504, etc), be sure to show up with a male (unfortunate reality mentioned recently by a lecturer at a best practices ADHD conference).

16. **Accommodations** (can literally be “whatever you can think of”). **This is where the gold is so go slow here and involve your child/student in coming up with them.** “There are literally millions” of accommodations but the art is in picking the top 5-8 and the more specific the better. Ask and involve the child, parent, teacher, when developing accommodations. Below are a list of commonly used accommodations to get you thinking.

   a. **Copy of the textbooks** used in school for home use (because they forget to bring home their text books).
b. A study buddy or peer to help them stay on task or remind your child to bring their homework home or even to write the homework down. Study buddy could also share their notes.
c. Or just having your sit next to a well-behaved role model.
d. Sit close to teacher and away from distractions (e.g. avoid window).
e. Consider, where possible, a standing desk.
f. Allow students to dictate assignments into a recording device.
g. Having extra time to complete homework assignments as well as tests and quizzes.
h. Break long assignments into smaller segments. Use with visual calendar for due dates for the different segments.
i. More frequent and short quizzes vs long tests.
j. Taking quizzes and tests in quiet setting without time pressures.
k. Set a TIME limit for homework per night. The National Education Association recommend 10 minute of homework per night per grade. First grade (10-20 minutes and then increase 10 minutes per grade).
l. Set a timer for 10-minute intervals and have your child stand up and show their progress on their work.
m. Frequent breaks to stand up and stretch or run around the playground.
n. Ask for copy of the class notes from teacher.
o. Being given partial credit or the right to hand in homework late without penalty.
p. Getting assignments and projects ahead of time so the student can plan accordingly.
q. Using a highlighter. Dress things up to be new, novel, and interesting.
r. Special ball to sit on, fidget toy, resistance bands on the chair legs to help satisfy the need to move.
s. Increase space between desks.
t. Have the teacher come up with a cue or “signal” when child is off task to avoid shaming them.
u. Provide folders to organize their desk area.
v. Provide written schedule for daily routines.
w. Allow use of computer in class.
x. Consider noise cancellation headphones.
y. Use visual and auditory channels to communicate information (e.g. graphs and pictures). Pair written instructions with oral instructions.
z. Help student get started on an in class assignment (lawn mower metaphor).

aa. One on one support (pull out).
bb. Younger kids: mark an area with tape around his or her desk in which he or she can move freely.
cc. Consider a social skills group due to problems with peers.
dd. Teachers should keep problems and assignments and problems on the board.

**Homework at Home Suggestions:**

1. Clear out a space for them to work (keep organized, clean, and well lit with little distractions on daily basis). Get them set up when they first get home and then let them unwind and recover from the day first (eat, lie down, etc).

2. Let them have a lot of leeway (standing up, listening to music, etc).
   Think out of the box. Be as creative as possible (“anything goes”). Chewing gum, headphones, dancing, etc.

3. Backpack cleaned and unpacked as soon as they get home. Get them all ready and set up for after downtime. Help your child prioritize his or her homework before they start.

4. Short fun breaks that the child can look forward to.
5. Visual calendar of homework for the week in their room.
6. Lawn mower metaphor, get them started. Jump start projects. Simply by being by their side for the first five minutes or so.
7. Copy of the textbooks at home.
8. Look at school loop with them where possible.
9. Have colorful highlighters.
10. Use school items to help them stay online (puddy, bands, moving chair).
11. Take big tasks and break them down into manageable parts.
13. Teach outlining and SQ3R method.
14. Home to school notebook for parents and teachers to write back and forth about specific weekly behavioral goals (parent child report card online).
15. Use child’s strengths. Make a game out of learning (football throws for spelling words). NNI
16. Focus on effort not grades. Consider academics as just one aspect of your child’s overall development.
17. Rules of the home (visual, colorful, simple, post, no more than 2-3). Vary rewards--change them up.
18. Pick your battles. Stay positive as their brains are wired for conflict and confrontation. Don’t take the bait. Don’t let them go back “online” through conflict.
19. Know things will get worse before they get better when you try something new like a behavioral plan.
20. Treat your own ADHD if relevant. This models self-care.
21. Use phone clocks and timers and vary the sound reminders. Consider placing clocks throughout the house.
22. Medications: Watch them take it.
23. Post the ADHD bill of rights and read it together often. Never underestimate the power of shame due to disability. Check in from time to time with your child and ask him or her how you are doing.

**Sample Letter Requesting a Section 504 Plan**

Parents name (Address) (Phone number)  
(Date)  
Principal’s name  
(Address)  

Special Education Director’s name  
(Address)  
Superintendent’s name  
(Address)  

Dear Educators and Administrators,

We are the parents of (Student's name), who attends (School's name) and is in the (Student's grade level). (Student's name) has recently been diagnosed with (List diagnosis), that directly impacts his educational performance and needs. Though the school and teachers have attempted to address some areas of concern,
(Student's name) continues to have difficulties, as many of the interventions have been unsuccessful. (Student's name) is making limited progress and as a result is experiencing increased frustration. To address our concerns we are requesting that (Student's name) be considered for an accommodation plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Thank you in advance for your collaborative efforts to provide our (Daughter/Son) with an appropriate and quality education. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you and your staff to ensure a successful educational experience for (Student's name).

Sincerely,

(Parents name)
Ms. X [Parent Name and Address]
Address
City, State, Zip Code
Telephone Number

Date [IMPORTANT: This process is driven by timelines.]

Date everything and note how it was delivered—mail or fax. Email is not recommended.

ATTN: Mr. or Ms X.
Director of Special Education
San Francisco Unified School District
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr or Ms. X.

I am the parent of John X, who is [X] years old and is currently enrolled at the [Regular Elementary School] in the [X] grade. My child has not been functioning well in school and I am concerned about his educational progress. I am writing to make a referral for assessment for special education services as
allowed under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and California Education Code Secs. 56029, 56301, 56302, and 56321(a) and 5 California Code of Regulations (C.C.R.) Sec. 3021. He may be eligible for special education assistance. I am requesting that John be given a comprehensive assessment by the school district in all areas of suspected disability, and that an IEP meeting be scheduled for him. Some of my concerns are stated below.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE:
In every request for INITIAL assessment, you should include a paragraph requesting that your child also be evaluated under the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act for any “disabling condition” that would require accommodations and/or services to enable your child to benefit from public education to the extent that students without disabilities do. (However, DO NOT agree to substitute a 504 Assessment for a special education assessment.) Such a paragraph might read as follows:

As part of the assessment process, I also request that my child be assessed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to determine whether he should be identified as handicapped pursuant to that law and to determine what, if any, accommodations might be required in his educational program in the event that he does not qualify for special education services, or in addition to special education services. This is also to request that the [Local Unified School District’s] 504 Coordinator be present at the IEP meeting to discuss the results and recommendations of the Section 504 assessment.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTE - OPTIONAL: You may wish to give specific examples of difficulties and concerns you, teachers or doctor have noted. If you have a specific diagnosis, reports or evaluations already, you may want to include them with your letter. You may want to attach doctor’s documentation or report if you believe this will help your school district understand your child’s disability/needs, or state that you have this documentation and can make it available to the school district. You may want to include CA Star test results, samples of written work, report cards, etc. that support your reasons for concern. You may want to get the classroom teacher to give you concrete examples and work products in writing that support the need for further investigation of the child’s problems. The U.S. Congress in IDEA law
specifically chose to use the term “educational progress,” a broad term to encompass all kinds of progress a child is expected to make in school. Concern is not limited to academic progress alone. It can mean motor problems, social problems, behavior issues, academic performance concerns, sensory overwhelm, etc. Below are some examples, but use your own examples.]

Here are some of my concerns related to John’s educational progress:

Testing: My child is in 4th grade and scoring below basic in the State tests in math, despite doing all the homework and trying his best.

Motor: My child has extreme difficulty with fine motor tasks and cannot write sufficiently well to complete classroom assignments in the time allotted.

Behavior/Socialization: My child is having behavior difficulties that are impairing his ability to succeed in the classroom environment. For example, he can’t keep his hands to himself, sit still, can’t resolve conflicts or socialize in an age appropriate way, he is being disciplined regularly, going to the office, etc.

Specific Disability or Health Issues: My child has a diagnosis of (name disability such as Autism, Dyslexia, Diabetes, Severe Allergy, etc., if applicable.) This affects his educational success because (exclusion, performance, etc).

Transition Services: I am concerned that my child does not have the skills necessary to successfully transition into the community or college after graduation or completion of high school. For example, he cannot balance a checkbook, take public transportation, etc. The assessment should examine his social, educational, emotional, career and independent living skills in order to develop an appropriate transition plan in his IEP.

**TIPS FOR IEP SUCCESS:**
1) Keep a binder.

2) Use your child’s name often.

3) Be specific about what behaviors are preventing your child from succeeding.

4) Send copies of your letter to several school officials. Holds them responsible.

5) Mark a day in your calendar that you will follow up if you have not heard anything. Call the people you sent the letter to to ask about scheduling the initial assessment appointment.

6) Remember you have the right to request an assessment for your child.

7) Know your rights for a 504 or IEP.

8) Try your best to work collaboratively. Be firm but friendly.