

Becoming Your Child's Advocate in the Schools

Enrolling a child with an Eosinophilic Disease, or informing the school of your child's complex chronic illness can be a very anxious time for parents. At school your child will be exposed to a group of teachers and students who may not understand the seriousness of your child's disease or special healthcare needs. Not only do you have the "normal" school worries about your child's school supplies, friends, or academic success; you also face serious concerns about your child's **safety**. You may worry about your child's involvement in school activities, interactions with friends, or even wonder who will manage your child's medications, tube feedings, or medical needs at school. Ideally the school nurse should be the person responsible for managing your child's special healthcare needs, but in reality, not every school can afford a full-time nurse, and Congress does not even mandate that healthcare in the schools be provided by a school nurse. In order to overcome these problems and create a safe, supportive environment for your child at school, you will need to work with your local school district to develop a management plan to meet your child's healthcare needs.

Why does my child need a healthcare plan at school?

In the past most school districts did not have to be concerned with the medical needs of children with complex chronic illnesses since they were usually educated at home or in hospitalized settings where their medical needs could be more properly addressed. However, with recent advances in medical technology, lawsuits, and new laws recognizing nursing services as a special education "related service" (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004), many children with chronic illnesses are attending public school. Since school personnel now manage children with respirators, medication pumps, and specialized nutritional requirements; many school districts are beginning to realize that fatigue, limited strength, or even the pain of a complex chronic illness, such as an Eosinophilic Disease, can affect a child's academic performance. So a number of school districts are classifying some chronically ill children as students with "Special Health Care Needs." This classification refers to a child whose complex medical disorder may adversely or substantially affect his/her ability to learn at school, and these children may be entitled to educational plans similar to those needed by children with physical/mental disabilities such as an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or Section 504 Accommodation Plan (504 Plan). For students whose chronic illness is not so severe that it impacts his/her ability to learn, many school districts realize that the traditional School Health Form is not adequate and are beginning to manage the student's "special healthcare needs" with a school nursing care plan called an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP or IHCP).

Since Eosinophilic Diseases are complex chronic illnesses, your child may be entitled to special education services, or accommodations in the regular education program. So it is important to have your child evaluated by your local school district to see if your child qualifies for an IEP, a 504 Plan, or IHP. You may feel that your child does not need to be in "special education" or need "accommodations" to succeed at school, but these plans may be the only way your school district can ensure that your child receives the health-related services he/she may need at school, or the homebound tutoring your child may need during a prolonged absence from school. Unfortunately special education services and accommodations to regular education are expensive, so you may end up fighting with the school district to get the services that your child needs. If you are to win this fight, you will have to become your child's advocate and prepare the school to understand your child's specific Eosinophilic Disease.

Where do I begin?

You do not have to become an expert but you should try to learn about the laws, regulations, and procedures that your local school district uses for children with special healthcare needs. One of the best places to begin is by talking to your local pediatrician or local

pediatric medical center. Your pediatrician or pediatric healthcare facility may know how your school system works and may be able to recommend other parents, information sources, or local support groups who can help you with your school. Your local healthcare professionals can also help identify your child to your local school district or to the national “Child Find” program as a child who may need special supports or help to succeed in school. “Child Find” is a federally mandated program that requires each state to “identify, locate and evaluate” all children ages birth to 21 with disabilities (including complex chronic illnesses) that can affect a child’s ability to learn.

CHILD FIND website

<http://www.childfindidea.org/>

Guide for students with chronic illnesses

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/guidfam.pdf>

<http://www.jjc.cc.il.us/StAR/PDFs/chronicPain.pdf>

Contact the Department of Education in your state and request a copy of the ***Parent’s Guide*** to Special Education services (it may have a different title in your state). Read the guide and learn about the laws, regulations, and procedures used by your state that pertain to special education and children with disabilities, hidden disabilities, or special healthcare needs. You can request copies of all information on special education services, policies for students with special healthcare needs, and special education regulations by calling or writing to your local school district or your state’s Department of Education (SDE); or you can download copies of this information from your state’s Department of Education or Department of Special Education website. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education website also contains a great deal of information and resources for parents of children with special needs or special healthcare needs. It does explain the federal laws and you may want to take a few minutes to look over the information on this site as well.

State-by-State Department of Education listing

http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SEA

State-by-State Director of Special Education listing

http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SSE

State-by State Director of Children with Special Health Needs listing

http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SCH

US DOE/Office of Special Education website

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/edpicks.jhtml?src=ln>

Learn as much as you can from local groups, school PTA meetings, or other parents about your school system: how it operates, how special education or 504 Plan decisions are made, how it handles children with special health care needs or dietary restrictions, and the school personnel who will make decisions about the services the school will provide your child. Your state’s Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) or your state’s Community Parent Resource Center (PCRC) may be able to help. Each state has at least one center which offers free training sessions, guides, and information that can help parents become advocates for their children ages 3-21 in the schools. You can find information on parent training programs or examples of parent guides at these websites:

State-by-State Parent Training Centers

http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_cd=SPT

State-by-State Services and Resources for children with special needs

http://wdcrobcop01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list_by_territory.cfm

<http://www.nichcy.org>

<http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com>

Examples of State Parent's Guide

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/SPED/ieproj/guide/goals.html> (Nebraska)

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/proguide.pdf> (Massachusetts)

When should I notify the school?

You should notify the school in writing as soon as possible after your child has been diagnosed with an Eosinophilic Disease. If your child is already in school, contact your school principal, tell your child's teacher, and be sure to contact the school nurse immediately. If your child is not in school, and has not been identified by the "Child Find" system, contact your local school 2-3 months before your child starts kindergarten. Each state and each school district will have a preferred method for notification. Ask your child's physician to also write a letter to the school requesting an evaluation for special education and related services due to your child's chronic illness. A referral from a healthcare professional will alert the school to the fact that you child does indeed have special healthcare needs that should be evaluated to determine eligibility for special education services or school accommodations.

Put together a folder for the school and provide school personnel with as much information about your child's disease and special healthcare needs as possible. Include articles on Eosinophilic Diseases and information from leading medical centers and organizations such as APFED. Include letters from your child's physicians clearly stating the nature of your child's Eosinophilic disease, your child's special dietary or feeding requirements, and a list of any food allergies, asthma, or other disabilities your child may have. Finally include a list of symptoms, medications and how to administer them, any special dietary needs, emergency procedures, contact information for your child's physicians, and a complete description of what the school should expect when your child is ill, such as frequent doctor visits, prolonged absences, or hospitalizations. Deliver a copy of this file to the school principal, your child's teacher, and the school nurse. The school nurse may be the most important person involved in this whole process and your child's medical folder will be an invaluable tool for the nurse to prepare your child's IHP or to help evaluate your child's eligibility for special education or school accommodations.

Who is eligible for these plans?

Eligibility criteria for special educational and related services, or for accommodations in the regular education program, vary from state to state, and even school district to school district. Each state sets its own standards and criteria for a free public education. However, there are 3 federal laws that protect the rights of students with major physical /mental disabilities or with hidden disabilities (chronic illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, or food allergies etc.) to a "free appropriate, public education" (FAPE). These are the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504. ADA and Section 504 are really civil rights laws that prevent a school system from discriminating against a student on the basis of his/her disability. Under these laws a school system must make certain modifications or accommodations (such as ramps) that allow students with life altering disabilities (such as being unable to walk) with access to the school classrooms and learning. IDEA 2004 is the special education law which mandates the Individual Education Plan. This law is the backbone of special education and its purpose is to provide students with disabilities that adversely affect their ability to learn with special educational and related services designed to support their unique needs and ensure that the student has every opportunity to learn at school.

If your child's Eosinophilic Disease is so severe that may **adversely affect** his/her ability to learn at school (or your child has other disabilities such as food allergies, asthma, ADHD, seizures) your child may qualify for special educational and related services under IDEA 2004. Whether your child's Eosinophilic Disease qualifies as a disability under this law is determined by your school district on a case-by-case basis. Requirements for a disability under IDEA 2004 are very strict. IDEA 2004 defines 13 different physical or mental impairments that qualify for special educational and related services. Eosinophilic Diseases are not specifically identified under these 13 listed impairments but children with Eosinophilic Disease may qualify under the Other Health Impairment (OHI) category of IDEA 2004. If your school system determines that your child qualifies as disabled under this law, the school district will write an Individual Education Plan (IEP) describing the special educational and related services, and accommodations that your child will receive at school.

If your child does not qualify as disabled under IDEA 2004, but your child's Eosinophilic Disease **substantially impacts** one or more of her/his daily life functions, your child may be classified as disabled and entitled to educational accommodations or modifications at school under ADA and Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. These laws are less strict than IDEA 2004 and define major life functions as activities that the average student can perform on a daily basis without any difficulty. Major life functions that would qualify as a disability or hidden disability under ADA and Section 504 would include an impact on the ability to take care of one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, eating, or even breathing. Under these laws a student's disability may not necessarily affect his/her ability to learn at school, but the student may need some extra help or support to access, or even stay, in the classroom and learn. Basically, under ADA and Section 504, your child's Eosinophilic Disease must require school, classroom, or class schedule modifications (such as breaks for frequent feedings) that the school does not provide for the general student population. Whether your child qualifies under these laws as disabled will be determined by your local school district on a case-by-case basis. If your school district agrees that your child's Eosinophilic Disease does impact his/her major life functions, the school will provide your child with a Section 504 Accommodation plan (or designation).

In many states, if a child does not meet the school district's eligibility criteria for an IEP or 504 Plan, the school may offer a chronically ill child an **Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP or IHCP)**. This is a formal nursing care plan for children with moderate to severe chronic illnesses whose complex medical needs cannot be fully addressed by the traditional School Health Form. . The IHP clearly explains to a child's teacher and school administration what health related help a student may need to stay in school and learn. The IHP is designed to complement the School Health Form, since these forms were not designed to manage to the healthcare needs of a child with a complex chronic illness. The School Health Form has traditionally been used by many school systems to only identify a child with a chronic illness to the school health system; and often the school nurse (who deals with a child's healthcare needs) and a child's teacher (who deals with the child's academic needs) do not discuss the impact a child's chronic illness may have on his/her ability to learn. As a result many states now use an IHP as an extra protection for chronically ill students since it formally notifies school administration and teachers of a child's health related needs at school, such as medications, frequent feedings, or even life threatening food allergies. You can read more about eligibility for IEP, 504 Plan, or IHP at:

IDEA 2004 eligibility

http://whhttp://www.michigan.gov/documents/2002-06-06MichiganAdmRulesSpEd_34533_7.pdf

www.glendale.k12.ca.us/Internal/spEd/whoeligSE.htm

<http://www.howard.k12.md.us/special/general.html>

Section 504 & ADA eligibility

<http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/504.html>

http://www.rockingham.k12.va.us/RCPS_spEd/Section504.html

Individual Healthcare Plan

(National Association of School Boards state-by state IHP listing)

<http://www.nasbe.org/HealthySchools/States/Topics.asp?Category=E&Topic=4>

<http://www.nationalguidelines.org/guideline.cfm?guideNum=4-20>

What is an IEP?

An **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** is a formal written legal document that describes the accommodations, special educational and related services a school district will provide a student who is identified as having a disability under (IDEA) 2004 guidelines. Basically, the IEP is a contact between a local school district and an eligible student from ages 3 to 21 years old. The school district and State Department of Special Education are legally responsible for providing a student with any educational or related service, health-related duty, accommodation, or placement that is written down in an IEP. The special educational services defined in an IEP may include special education teachers, specialized instructional tools for studying when a child's medication interferes with the ability to concentrate, assistive technology, or even homebound tutoring for prolonged absences from school. The related services that a child may need under an IEP can include supports such as speech, physical, or occupational therapy, or even nursing services for G tube feedings or medication administration. There are formal written IEP procedures for notifying parents of meetings, plan changes, consent, evaluations, or annual review and a formal system of procedural safeguards including formal state IDEA complaint, mediation, and "Due Process" (legal action), before resorting to a lawsuit in state or federal court to resolve IEP disagreements. The IEP also provides the student with a number of protections under state and federal laws, including the civil rights protections under ADA and Section 504, and a school district may even lose federal funding if it violates an IEP.

The IEP is an educational plan regulated by the school district's Special Education Department and developed by a team that includes the parent(s), a representative of the school district (special education representative or supervisor), and the student's teacher. Others who may be asked to join the IEP team are the student when appropriate (usually age 12-14 or older), school or related service professionals who have evaluated the student, and advocates or witnesses for the parents. Parents are active partners and important members of the IEP Planning and Placement Teams (PPT) that decide what should be in a student's educational plan and where that student should be placed. The actual plan includes an assessment of the student's present educational level, academic needs, goals and objectives for the next school year, the extent that the student will participate in regular education, and most importantly it defines the accommodations, special educational and related services (how often, how much etc.) the school will provide the student. For students with special healthcare needs, such as an Eosinophilic Disease, the most important point of the IEP process is that the school district becomes legally responsible for providing any nursing or healthcare services written into the IEP goals section or of an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP) included in an IEP. The school district may also receive federal funding through Medicaid to cover nursing services when the IHP is included in an IEP. You can read more about an IEP at these websites:

IEP

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>

<http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.asp?r=73>

<http://www.brightfutures.org/mentalhealth/pdf/families/mc/iep.pdf>

How does the IEP process work?

The basic IEP Process has seven steps: Referral, Evaluation, Eligibility Determination, Planning and Placement, Implementation, Annual Review, and Re-evaluation. The process is

very formal, has defined timelines, and is governed by a number of state and federal regulations. You will need to read the ***Parent's Guide*** for your state to understand your state's IEP cycle requirements, procedural safeguards, and time limits that your state has set to complete each step in the IEP process.

Referral is the first step in the IEP process and it alerts the school district to a student's possible need for special education services. You, your child's physician, a teacher, or even "Child Find" may request that your child be evaluated for special education by notifying your school district's Director of Special Education or the Principal of your child's school. Each state and each district will have a process for special education referrals (some districts will require written notification while others may only need verbal notification). Once the school district receives a referral requesting a special education evaluation for your child, the school district has a set time limit (usually 15 days) in which to agree to evaluate your child for special education or refuse. If the school district refuses to evaluate your child, you must be given a written notice and explanation for the refusal. This "notice of refusal" must include an explanation of the safeguards available to parents of a child with a suspected disability including the right to challenge the school district's decision by requesting a due process (legal action) hearing. If the school district accepts your request, your child will be referred for an evaluation. Since your child has a complex chronic illness, you may want to consider having your child's pediatrician or specialist request the special education evaluation. School districts often respond better to a professional referral since it alerts them to your child's serious healthcare issues, and the school may ask the school nurse to immediately start preparing an Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP) for your child. The IHP can define your child's healthcare needs, and demonstrate to the school district's educational professionals the impact your child's chronic illness may have on his/her ability to learn.

Evaluation of your child for special education services is conducted by a multidisciplinary team to assess your child's educational performance in all areas related to the suspected disability, and there is a set time limit defined by your state for this process. Since your child's disability is health-related, your child will probably not be evaluated for learning, psychological, or behavioral disabilities that can impact academic performance. Instead, you and your child's healthcare providers will be asked to provide the multidisciplinary team with information about your child's specific Eosinophilic Disease, symptoms, behavior, school absences, medical history, evaluations, and hospitalizations. The purpose of this information and the evaluation is to determine if your child meets the criteria for a disability under IDEA 2004, usually under the Other Health Impairment (OHI) category. A complex chronic illness does not automatically qualify a child for special education services under the OHI category. However, a school nursing assessment, or IHP, along with input from your child's physicians may be enough to convince a multidisciplinary team that your child's Eosinophilic disease may adversely impact his/her opportunity to learn in school.

Eligibility Determination takes place once the evaluation is complete. You will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation and decide if your child has a disability under IDEA 2004. This meeting may be called an IEP Determination meeting or IEP Planning and Placement (PPT) meeting. If your child is not found to be eligible at this meeting, and you disagree with the results of the evaluation, you have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE), and the school system may have to pay for this evaluation and help you locate a state approved IEE provider. If the school district finds that your child does not meet the eligibility criteria for disabled under IDEA (and you agree) but your child's illness may impact his/her ability to learn, your child may be referred to the district 504 Coordinator for an evaluation. If your child is found eligible under IDEA, then a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) forms to develop the IEP and you as the parent are part of this team. Depending on your school district, and your state, the Eligibility Determination, and PPT meetings may be separate activities or occur within a single meeting if your child is found eligible for an IEP.

At the **Planning and Placement** Team (PPT) meeting the school district actually writes the formal contact which defines the placement and educational plan it will provide your child, and you are an active member of this team meeting. Placement may be the easiest step for your child since most children with complex chronic illnesses are educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) possible, and this means in the regular education classroom with their peers. Any special services your child may receive can often be done outside the classroom with as little disruption in the classroom schedule as possible. The actual education plan may be a little harder. Since your child has a complex chronic illness, it is especially important that you have the school district clearly write the healthcare services your child needs at school in the goals section of your child's IEP, or include the your child's IHP in the IEP. (When the IHP is included in your child's IEP the school district becomes legally responsible for implementing it.) You may also want to include provisions for handling school work or tests during one of your child's "flare ups" or how to handle frequent absences, doctor appointments, medication side effects, and nutritional needs in your child's IEP. Your child may also be entitled to food accommodations in the cafeteria, and this can also be written into the IEP. There are a number of excellent resources that can help you with the points you need to consider when writing your child's IEP. You should visit websites like *Wrightslaw* or *Schwab Learning* for help with the development of an IEP or for resolving conflicts with your school district over services your child may need. You need to realize that these plans can be are expensive and PPT meetings can become very emotional when you and your school disagree, but there are organizations, resources, and advocates who can help you through this process. .

Technically, your state's Department of Special Education is responsible for the **Implementation** of your child's IEP and will have specific timelines for implementing an IEP. Usually if your child is already in school, any written IEP should be implemented immediately. If your child is just starting school, the IEP should be implemented the first day your child starts kindergarten. Every IEP is **Reviewed Annually**, and you will be asked to attend any IEP meeting where your child IEP is revised or reviewed. You also have the right to request revising your child's IEP as your child's condition changes. However, the only way you can protect your child and ensure his/her safety at school is to attend all IEP meetings. Your child will be **Re-evaluated** every 3 years for special education eligibility and educational needs. You can read more about the IEP process at these websites.

IEP Process

<http://www.wrightslaw.com>

<http://www.schwablearning.org>

<http://www.specialeducationlawyers.info/evaluations.htm>

What is a 504 Plan?

A Section 504 Accommodation Plan (or designation) describes the accommodations a school district will provide a student identified with a disability defined under ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The 504 Plan is basically an agreement between the school district and the student that describes the modifications in the regular education program the school district will make to ensure that a student has equal access and opportunity to learn. Although a 504 Plan is less formal IEP, it still has provisions for notifying parents, procedural safeguards and legally documents the accommodations, modifications, or related services the school district will provide a student. Since these plans are prepared to comply with civil rights laws, school districts must ensure that students with disabilities, or hidden disabilities, have the same opportunity to participate in all school programs as students who do not have disabilities. The 504 Plan protects the civil rights of the student in school, but does not entitle the student to special education services, or the special legal protections of an IEP. The 504 Accommodation

Plan is the responsibility of a school district's Regular Education Department. Depending on a student's disability, a 504 plan may provide a student with modifications to the regular education class schedule, accommodations on extra curricular activities or field trips, school transportation helps, and even assistance with health-related needs or services, or a special diet in the cafeteria. While there are no requirements that a 504 plan be written, it does have to have documentation of evaluations and accommodations that will be provided to a student. If the school decides to ignore the plan, the parents have procedural safeguards for complaints to the school district 504 Compliance Officer or the U.S. Regional Office of Civil Rights before pursuing a civil lawsuit.

Rhonda Riggott, President of the Connecticut Chapter of the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network has written a wonderful article about 504 Plans and the process of writing a plan for a child with severe food allergies. You can access her article at:

<http://www.foodallergyadvocate.com/Section504IDEA.htm>

504 Plan

<http://www.504idea.org/504overview.html>

<http://www.chtu.org/504.html>

<http://doe.sd.gov/octe/section504/docs/Section%20504.pdf>

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

How does the 504 Process work?

The 504 Designation Process is less formal and more streamlined than the IEP Process. It has 4 basic steps: Referral, Determination, Plan, and Scheduled Review. Your child may be referred to your school district's 504 Coordinator by you, a teacher, physician, or even the IEP determination team. Each school district has a procedure for a 504 Plan referral and you may want to contact your Superintendent or 504 Coordinator for a copy of your school district's 504 Plan Policy. In most school districts, if the 504 Coordinator decides that your child does not qualify for a 504 Plan, you do have the right to file a complaint with the district 504 Compliance Officer or regional Office of Civil Rights, and request an impartial hearing. However, if the 504 Coordinator decides that your child may have a disability that qualifies under Section 504 and ADA, he convenes "a team of individuals knowledgeable about the student" to determine what accommodations your child may need in the regular education program to succeed in school. Depending on your school district you may or may not be invited to the team meeting. The laws do not require your participation in 504 team meetings, your consent for an assessment or evaluation of your child, or even your agreement with your child's 504 plan or placement. The laws only require that you be notified of an evaluation or major change in your child's educational plan or placement, have the right to review your child's records, and the right to challenge. However many school districts do include the parents in the 504 process and require your written consent or agreement with a 504 plan, placement, and evaluation.

Whether you are asked to be a member of the 504 team or not, you will be asked to provide the team with medical records, evaluations, letters from your child's doctors, nursing assessments, school records, history of illness, and any special evaluations that you may have. Your child's teacher and the school nurse are important members of this team since the team will use your healthcare information (and input) to decide if your child is eligible for accommodations in the regular education program under ADA and Section 504. If your child is eligible, the team will write a plan and decide where your child will be placed. Accommodations that may be included in your child's plan may include class schedule changes that allow your child to leave the class room for frequent feedings, access to nursing services for medications, or even the inclusion of your child's IHP in the 504 Plan. Your child's plan will be re-evaluated every 3 years

and many schools do review a 504 plan annually, although annual review is not required by the laws. You can read more about the 504 Process at these websites:

504 Process

<http://www.chagrin-falls.k12.oh.us/pupilservices/page8.htm>

<http://jeffcoweb.jeffco.k12.co.us/isu/504/504plan.pdf>

<http://tusdstats.tusd.k12.az.us/planning/resources/ADEMemos/SECTION504.pdf>

What is the difference between an IEP and 504 Plan?

The IEP and 504 plans are both educational plans for students with disabilities that provide the students with some protections and rights under federal laws, but there are a number of differences between the two plans. For instance an IEP is implemented under the school district's Special Education Department and U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education guidelines while a 504 Plan is implemented under a school district's Regular Education Department under the guidance of U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). School districts receive some federal funding for implementing a child's IEP but do not receive any federal funding for a 504 Plan. An IEP is a written, legal document while the 504 plan does not have to be a formal written document. Eligibility criteria for an IEP are very defined or specific and cover a student from ages 3-21 while the eligibility criteria for a 504 plan are more flexible and the civil rights protection of ADA and Section 504 cover a person for a lifetime. A student does not need both an IEP and 504 Plan. Students who have an IEP have the protections provided by IDEA 2004, ADA and Section 504, but students with a 504 plan do not have the federal protections of IDEA 2004 and the formal IEP. With an IEP the parents are active participants in the development of the educational plan and have an elaborate system of safeguards to protect the rights of the student such as prior (10 day) written notice of evaluations or changes to the IEP; written consent for evaluations; right to independent evaluations at public expense; and an impartial administrative complaint process, mediation, and due process. With a 504 Plan the safeguards do not ensure that parents are necessarily part of the planning team (though they may be invited to help), parental notification does not have to be in writing or prior to a change, evaluation, or placement, and the complaint process is with a school district 504 Compliance officer or regional Office of Civil Rights. However, the basic difference between the two education plans is that the IEP provides the student access to special education and related services, while a school district is not obligated to provide a student with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan access to special education or related services. You can learn more about the differences between IEP and 504 Plans at the following websites:

IEP vs. 504 Plan

<http://www.slc.sevier.org/iepv504.htm>

<http://school.familyeducation.com/special-education/ada/38439.html>

http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/504_IDEA_Rosenfeld.html

<http://doe.sd.gov/octe/section504/docs/Section%20504.pdf>

What is an Individualized Healthcare Plan?

The **Individualized Healthcare Plan (IHP or IHCP)** is basically a written nursing care plan for a child with a moderate to severe complex chronic illness. It is similar to the care plans that nurses prepare to manage children with complex medical needs in the hospital. The IHP can be included in an IEP or 504 Plan, or it can be a stand alone document. The IHP by itself does not provide a child with the legal protections of ADA, Section 504, or IDEA, but it is a formal written nursing healthcare plan for a student and it may be the first time that the school administration and teacher actually become aware of a child's specific medical needs in school. It is written by a certified school nurse with input from a child's parent and physicians, and it

includes a nursing diagnosis, Emergency Plan, Physician' Orders, nursing goals and interventions for the student, documentation of delegated nursing procedures and to whom the duty is delegated, documented training of school personnel, identification of a student's specific healthcare needs, and even includes the student's role in self care. You can read more about the IHP at these websites:

IHCP

http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki_misc.jsp?pid=2003

http://www.spannj.org/Family2Family/individual_health_plan.htm

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/Health/SHCP10appendixa.pdf>

<http://www.medicalhome.alabama.gov/applications/documentlibrary/1.2.4.1%20Individualized%20Health%20Care%20Plan%20-%20Mass%20Family%20Voices.pdf>

http://www.education.ky.gov/users/jneal/HSRG/ch7/Role_of_school_nurse.pdf

What else can I do to help my child in school?

You should attend all school meetings and communicate with your child's teacher, school nurse and school principal about your child's specific Eosinophilic Disease. Make sure to inform all school personnel, especially the school nurse, of any changes in your child's condition. Since communication is the key to successfully managing your child's illness at school, you may also want to learn the language of school education plans and the IHP. For instance, you may think the terms "medical needs" and "special healthcare needs" mean the same thing, but to a school administrator or principal these two terms have entirely different meanings. To a school district "medical needs" refer to services or procedures that must be addressed by a physician (often in a hospital) and by law the schools do not have to provide a student with medical services. However, to a school principal, "special healthcare needs" refer to services that can be performed by a school nurse or health-related personnel to help a child stay in school and learn, and by law the school must provide health services. Also consider using the terms disability, health related disability, hidden disability, or healthcare need when referring to your child's chronic illness or Eosinophilic Disease. Learning the vocabulary or terms used by your school district can help your child's principal, teacher, and nurse understand exactly what services, accommodations, supports, educational or health management plan your child may need to safely attend school and learn.

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