

**POLICY REGARDING SECTION 504  
OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“Section 504”) prohibits discrimination against individuals with a disability in any program receiving Federal financial assistance. To be protected under Section 504, an individual must be determined to: (1) have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) have a record of such an impairment; or (3) be regarded as having such an impairment.

In order to fulfill its obligation under Section 504, the Plainfield Public Schools recognizes a responsibility to avoid discrimination in policies and practices regarding its personnel, students, parents and members of the public who participate in school sponsored programs. In this regard, the Plainfield Public Schools prohibits discrimination against any person with a disability in any of the programs operated by the school system.

The school district also has specific responsibilities under Section 504 to identify, evaluate and provide an educational placement for students who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The school district’s obligation includes providing access to free appropriate public education (“FAPE”) for students determined to be eligible under Section 504. Under Section 504, FAPE is defined as the provision of regular or special education and related services that are designed to meet the individual educational needs of a student with a disability as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met, and that are provided without cost (except for fees imposed on nondisabled students/parents). If the parent or guardian of a student disagrees with the decisions made by the professional staff of the school district with respect to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of his/her child, a parent/guardian has a right to utilize the complaint procedures outlined in the Board’s Administrative Regulations, and/or may file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

Any student, parent, guardian or other individual who believes he/she has been discriminated against by or within the district on the basis of a disability may utilize the complaint procedures outlined in the Board’s Administrative Regulations, and/or may file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

Anyone who wishes to file a complaint, or who has questions or concerns about this policy, should contact Bryan Klimkiewicz, the Section 504 Coordinator for the Plainfield Public Schools, at phone number 860-564-6401

Legal References:       29 U.S.C. § 794  
                              34 C.F.R. § 104 et seq.  
                              42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.  
                              ADA Amendments of 2008, Public Law 110-325

*Protecting Students with Disabilities, Frequently Asked Questions About Section 504 and the Education of Children with Disabilities*, Office for Civil Rights (March 17, 2011), available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

*Dear Colleague Letter*, United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (January 19, 2012)

ADOPTED:     8/12/15

**ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING SECTION 504  
OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973**

Plainfield Board of Education Section 504 Grievance/Complaint Procedures

Section 504 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. For the purposes of Section 504, the term “disability” with respect to an individual means: (a) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual; (b) a record of such an impairment; or (c) being regarded as having such an impairment.

*I. Definitions*

**Free appropriate public education (FAPE):** for purposes of Section 504, refers to the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services that are designed to meet individual educational needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met, that are provided without cost (except for fees imposed on nondisabled students/parents), and is based upon adherence to procedures that satisfy the Section 504 requirements pertaining to educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards.

**Major life activities:** include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working. A major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including, but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine and reproductive functions.

**Mitigating Measures:** include, but are not limited to, medication, medical supplies, equipment, appliances, low-vision devices (not including ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses), prosthetics, hearing aids, cochlear implants, mobility devices, oxygen therapy, use of assistive technology, reasonable accommodations or auxiliary aids or services or learned behavioral or adaptive neurological modifications.

**Physical or Mental Impairment:** a) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine or b) any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

*II. Procedures for Grievances/Complaints Alleging Discrimination on the Basis of Disability*

- A. Any eligible person, including any student, parent/guardian, staff member or other employee who feels that he/she has been discriminated against on the basis of disability may submit a written complaint to the district’s designated Section 504 Coordinator within thirty (30) school days of the alleged occurrence. Timely

reporting of complaints facilitates the prompt investigation and resolution of such complaints. If the complaint is made verbally, the individual taking the complaint will reduce it to writing.

- B. At any time, when complaints involve discrimination that is directly related to a claim regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student under Section 504, the complainant may request that the Section 504 Coordinator submit the complaint directly to an impartial hearing officer and request a hearing in accordance with Section III.D. Complaints regarding a student's rights with respect to his/her identification, evaluation or educational placement shall be addressed in accordance with the procedures set forth below in Section III.
- C. Retaliation against any individual who complains pursuant to the Board's policy and regulations listed herein is strictly prohibited. The district will not tolerate any reprisals or retaliation that occur as a result of the good faith reporting or complaint of disability-based discrimination, or as a result of an individual's participation or cooperating in the investigation of a complaint. The district will take necessary actions to prevent retaliation as a result of filing a complaint or the participation in an investigation of a complaint.
- D. If the Section 504 Coordinator is the subject of the complaint, the complaint should be submitted directly to the Superintendent who may conduct the investigation or appoint a designee to conduct the investigation.
- E. Complaints will be investigated promptly within timeframes identified below. Timeframes may be extended as needed given the complexity of the investigation, availability of individuals with relevant information and other extenuating circumstances. Confidentiality will be maintained by all persons involved in the investigation to the extent possible.
- F. The complaint should contain the following information:
  - 1. The name of the complainant;
  - 2. The date of the complaint;
  - 3. The date(s) of the alleged discrimination;
  - 4. The names of any witness(es) or individuals relevant the complaint; and
  - 5. A detailed statement describing the circumstances in which the alleged discrimination occurred.

However, all complaints will be investigating to the extent possible, even if such information is not included in the complaint. In such circumstances, additional information may be requested by the investigator as part of the investigation process.

- G. Upon receipt of the complaint, the individual investigating the complaint shall:
  - 1. Provide a copy of the written complaint to the Superintendent of Schools;

2. Meet with the complainant within ten (10) school days to discuss the nature of the complaint, identify individuals the complainant believes has relevant information, and obtain any relevant documents the complainant may have;
  3. Provide the complainant with a copy of the Board's Section 504 Policy and applicable administrative regulations;
  4. Investigate the factual basis for the complaint, including interviews with individuals with information and review of documents relevant to the complaint;
  5. Maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable throughout the investigative process, in accordance with state and federal law;
  6. Communicate the outcome of the investigation in writing to the complainant, and to any individual properly identified as a party to the complaint (to the extent permitted by state and federal confidentiality requirements), within fifteen (15) school days from the date the complaint was received by the Section 504 Coordinator or Superintendent. The investigator may extend this deadline for no more than fifteen (15) additional school days if needed to complete the investigation. The complainant shall be notified of such extension. The written notice shall include a finding whether the complaint was substantiated and if so, shall identify how the district will remedy any identified violations of Section 504;
  7. After an investigation, may attempt to resolve any potential violation of Section 504 and/or the complainant's concerns, if possible;
  8. Ensure that appropriate corrective action is taken whenever allegations are verified. When allegations are verified, ensure that compensatory services are considered and offered, when appropriate.
  9. If a complaint is made during summer recess, the complaint will be reviewed and addressed as quickly as possible given the availability of staff and/or other individuals who may have information relevant to the complaint.
- H. If the complainant is not satisfied with the findings and conclusions of the investigation, the complainant may present the complaint and written outcome to the Superintendent for review and reconsideration within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the findings. This process provides an opportunity for complainants to bring information to the Superintendent's attention that would change the outcome of the investigation. In submitting the complaint and written outcome for review, the complainant must explain why he/she believes the factual

information was incomplete, the analysis of the facts was incorrect, and/or the appropriate legal standard was not applied, *and* how this would change the investigator's determination in the case. Failure to do so may result in the denial of the review.

Upon review of a written request from the complainant, the Superintendent shall review the investigative results of the Section 504 Coordinator and determine if further action and/or investigation is warranted. Such action may include consultation with the investigator and complainant, a meeting with appropriate individuals to attempt to resolve the complaint or a decision affirming or overruling the investigator's conclusions or findings. The Superintendent shall provide written notice to the complainant of the proposed actions within ten (10) school days following the receipt of the written request for review.

*III. Complaint Resolution Procedures for Complaints Involving a Student's Identification, Evaluation, and/or Educational Placement*

Complaints regarding a student's identification, evaluation, or educational placement shall generally be handled using the procedures described below, **However, at any time, the complainant may request that the Section 504 Coordinator submit the complaint directly to an impartial hearing officer, and request a hearing in accordance with the provisions of subsection D (below).**

A. Submission of Complaint to Section 504 Coordinator

1. In order to facilitate the prompt investigation of complaints, any complaint regarding a student's identification, evaluation or educational placement under Section 504 should be forwarded to the district's Section 504 Coordinator within thirty (30) school days of the alleged date that the dispute regarding the student's identification, evaluation or education placement arose. Timely reporting of complaints facilitates the resolution of potential educational disputes as it assists the district in gathering current, accurate information and enables the district to take corrective actions when necessary to ensure that a student is provided with an appropriate educational program.
2. The complaint concerning a student's identification, evaluation or educational placement should contain the following information:
  - a. Full name of the student, age, and grade level;
  - b. Name of parent(s);
  - c. Address and relevant contact information for parent/complainant;
  - d. Date of complaint;
  - e. Specific areas of disagreement relating to the student's identification, evaluation or placement; and
  - f. Remedy requested.

However, all complaints will be investigated to the extent possible even if such information is not included in the complaint. In such circumstances, additional information may be requested by the investigator as part of the investigation process.

3. Complaints will be investigated promptly within timeframes identified below. Timeframes may be extended as needed given the complexity of the investigation, availability of individuals with relevant information and other extenuating circumstances.
4. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Section 504 Coordinator shall:
  - a. Forward a copy of the complaint to the Superintendent of Schools;
  - b. Meet with the complainant within ten (10) school days to discuss the nature of his/her concerns and determine if an appropriate resolution can be reached. If a complaint is made during summer recess, the complaint will be reviewed and addressed as quickly as possible given the availability of staff and other individuals who may have information relevant to the complaint;
  - c. If, following such a meeting, further investigation is deemed necessary, the Section 504 Coordinator shall promptly investigate the factual basis for the complaint, consulting with any individuals reasonably believed to have relevant information, including the student and/or complainant; and
  - d. Communicate the results of his/her investigation in writing to the complainant and any persons named as parties to the complaint (to the extent permitted by state and federal confidentiality requirements) within fifteen (15) school days from the date the complaint was received by the Section 504 Coordinator.
  - e. In the event that the person making the complaint contends that the Section 504 Coordinator has a conflict of interest that prevents him/her from serving in this role, the complaint shall be forwarded to the Superintendent who shall appoint an investigator who does not have a conflict of interest.

**B. Review by Superintendent of Schools**

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the findings and/or resolution offered as a result of the Section 504 Coordinator's review, he or she may present the complaint and the written statement of findings to the Superintendent for review and reconsideration within thirty (30) calendar days of receiving the findings. This process provides an opportunity for

complainants to bring information to the Superintendent's attention that would change the outcome of the investigation. In submitting the complaint and written outcome for review, the complainant must explain why he/she believes the factual information was incomplete, the analysis of the facts was incorrect, and/or the appropriate legal standard was not applied, *and* how this would change the investigator's determination in the case. Failure to do so may result in the denial of the review.

2. The Superintendent shall review the complaint and any relevant documents maintained by the Section 504 Coordinator/investigator and shall consult with the Section 504 Coordinator/investigator regarding attempts to resolve the complaint. The Superintendent also shall consult with the complainant. The Superintendent may attempt to resolve the complainant's concerns alone, or with another appropriate administrator.
3. Following the Superintendent's review, he or she shall communicate his/her findings to the complainant within ten (10) school days following his/her receipt of the written request for review.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision or proposed resolution, he/she may request that the Superintendent submit the matter to a neutral mediator or to an impartial hearing officer. This request for a hearing/mediation should be made within fifteen (15) school days of the Superintendent's decision. Mediation shall only occur by mutual agreement of the parties.

C. Mediation Procedures:

1. The neutral mediator must be someone who is knowledgeable about Section 504 and the differences between Section 504 and the regulations and requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
2. The mediator shall inform all parties involved of the date, time and place of the mediation and of the right to have legal counsel or other representation at the complainant's own expense, if desired.
3. The mediator shall meet with the parties jointly, or separately, as determined by the mediator, and shall facilitate a voluntary settlement of the dispute between the parties, if possible.
4. All statements, offers or discussions during the mediation process shall be confidential.
5. If the parties are not able to reach a voluntary settlement of the dispute, the complainant may request an impartial hearing, as described below.

D. Impartial Hearing Procedures:

6. The impartial hearing officer must be someone who is knowledgeable about Section 504 and the differences between Section 504 and the regulations and requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
  7. The impartial hearing officer shall inform all parties involved of the date, time and place of the hearing and of the right to present witness(es) and to have legal counsel or other representation at the complainant's own expense, if desired.
  8. The impartial hearing officer shall hear all aspects of the complainant's complaint and/or appeal concerning the identification, evaluation and/or educational placement of the student and shall reach a decision within forty-five (45) school days of receipt of the request for hearing. The decision shall be presented in writing to the complainant and to the Section 504 Coordinator.
  9. A Section 504 impartial hearing officer does not have jurisdiction to hear claims alleging discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on an individual's disability unless such a claim is *directly related* to a claim regarding the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student under Section 504.
- E. The time limits noted throughout Section III may be extended if more time is needed to permit thorough review and opportunity for resolution.

IV. *The Section 504 Coordinator for this district is:*

Bryan Klimkiewicz  
Assistant Superintendent of Student Services  
651 Norwich Road  
Plainfield, CT 06374  
Telephone: (860) 564-6401.

IV. *Complaints to Office of Civil Rights*

At any time, the complainant has the right to file a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, 5 Post Office Square, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02109-0111 (TELEPHONE NUMBER (617) 289-0111).

Revised: May 2015