

# NEWSLETTER

**JANUARY 2025**

ISSUE 3

2024-2025 School Year



**WHAT'S NEW!**

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**Section 504 & Hospital Homebound**

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- Virtual Parent Education
- Parent Resource



Dr. Watina April  
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Exceptional Education  
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**Meet our Senior Coordinator for Section 504 & Hospital Homebound!**

Dr. Watina April serves as the Senior Coordinator of the Section 504/HHB Office in the DeKalb County School District. She is a proud graduate of Redan High School. Her deep connection to the community inspires her tireless dedication to ensuring every student has access to equitable opportunities. In her current role, she oversees Section 504 and Hospital Homebound, which are designed to support students with disabilities and health-related challenges, providing them with the resources they need to thrive academically and personally.

Passionate about fostering positive outcomes for all students, Dr. April is committed to creating inclusive systems that address the diverse needs of learners. With extensive experience in education and advocacy, she strives to ensure every child receives a high-quality education that empowers them to succeed. Guided by her own journey as a product of DeKalb County schools, Dr. April remains a steadfast advocate for students and families, inspiring others with her unwavering dedication and vision for a brighter future.

**Introducing the Section 504/ Hospital Homebound (HHB) Team**



Dr. Allison Marks  
504/HHB Coordinator II



Dr. Watina April,  
Senior Coordinator



Dr. Kiandra Tyus  
504/HHB Coordinator II



Shanteri McCrary, Liaison



Deja Lewis, Secretary



Jessica Cooper, Liaison

# What is Section 504 all about?

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is a federal civil rights law that prevents intentional or unintentional discrimination against persons with disabilities. This legislation protects the civil rights of disabled persons.

## How does Section 504 define “disability”?

Disability describes anyone who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities or bodily function.



Section 504 states: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the US, as defined in section 706(8) of this title, 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.”[42 U.S.C. § 794]

## What are “Major Life Activities”?

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, Interaction with Others, and Working.

## What is Hospital Homebound (HHB)?

Hospital Homebound services are educational programs designed for students who are unable to attend school for a prolonged period due to medical conditions. These services ensure that students can continue their education while receiving medical treatment or recovering at home.

## Eligibility Criteria

- Enrollment in the DeKalb County School District.
- Must have a medical and/or psychiatric condition that is documented by a licensed physician/psychiatrist.
- Anticipated to be absent from school for minimum of 10 consecutive school days or intermittently to exceed 10 school days.







# CHILD FIND

Locate \* Identify \* Evaluate

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

is a civil rights law that protects against disability-based discrimination of qualified students. Section 504 seeks to ensure equity and access to educational programming and services in all DCSD schools. For more information about Section 504 and how we can support your child, please contact:

**Section504@dekalbschoolsga.org.**

<https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/section-504-protections>

## Hospital Homebound

is a program designed to support students who are temporarily unable to attend school due to a medical or psychological condition. Services are designed to ensure that your child continues to receive academic instruction while at home or in the hospital. If your child has excessive absences (10 or more days) from school due to a medical or psychological issue, it is important to explore the Hospital Homebound Program. Services can be provided on a full-time or intermittent basis. For more information about Hospital Homebound, please contact:

**DekalbHHB@dekalbschoolsga.org.**

<https://www.dekalbschoolsga.org/hospital-homebound>

<https://gadoe.org/parent-family-resources/hospital-homebound-services>



**DeKalb County**  
School District

Exceptional Education

## Did You Know?

Section 504 ensures equitable access to: the district's curriculum, instruction, building facilities, transportation, extracurricular activities, etc.

The definition of a disability under Section 504 is a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities or bodily functions.

Students can be considered for 504 protections if a disability is suspected, even if there is no medical diagnosis.

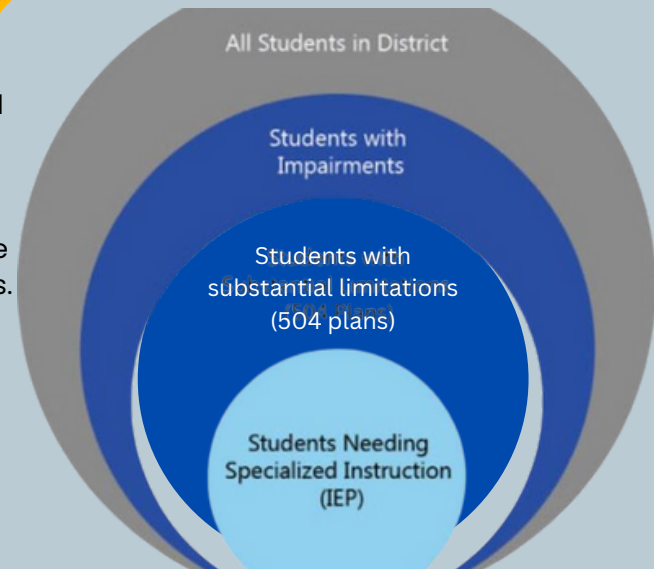
# Did You Know?

**Section 504 is NOT Special Education:** It's part of general education and focuses on removing barriers so students can succeed in the regular classroom.

**Accommodations Should Focus on Access:** Examples include extra time on tests, preferential seating, use of technology, or breaks during lessons.

**It's a Team Effort:** Section 504 plans are developed collaboratively with input from parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

**It Protects Beyond School:** Section 504 ensures your child's rights in after-school programs, extracurricular activities, and even college admissions.



**Communicate Regularly:** Stay in touch with teachers and school staff to monitor your child's progress.

**Be Informed:** Understand your child's rights under Section 504. Knowledge is power!

**Advocate for Your Child:** Speak up if you feel your child's needs are not being met.

**Students may qualify for HHB services if they have a medical condition that prevents them from attending school for an extended period, typically more than 2 consecutive weeks.**

**A physician must provide documentation stating the nature of the illness and the anticipated duration of absence.**

**HHB services are not intended to supplant regular school services and are by design temporary.**

**The transition back to school is carefully planned and may involve a gradual reintegration process. The HHB teacher, school counselor, 504 chair/LTSE, and classroom teachers collaborate to support the student's return, ensuring any necessary accommodations are in place.**



# UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

## IEP



## Section 504 Plan

### INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

*Exceptional Education:*

- Governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).
- For students with specific disabilities that adversely affect educational performance.
- Requires eligibility based on one of 13 disability categories outlined with IDEA.
- Provides specialized instruction, related services, and/or modifications & accommodations tailored to the student's needs.

### SECTION 504 PLAN

*General Education:*

- Governed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- For students with disabilities that substantially limit major life activities or bodily functions but does not require specialized instruction.
- Requires eligibility based on a broader definition of disability.
- Provides accommodations to ensure equal access to education and school activities.
- Does not require annual goals or progress monitoring but does include review meetings to ensure that student receives FAPE.
- Developed by a team, including parents, teachers, administrators, and other relevant school personnel.



# WHO DO I CONTACT?

## School Support

### Your school's **504 Chairperson:**

- Concerns involving: Section 504 Eligibility, 504 Review meetings, parental consent, Section 504 transportation issues, transferring a 504 Plan to a new school, school communication issues

### Your school **ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL:**

- Concerns involving: Disciplinary actions, school safety, procedures and policies, inappropriate staff conduct, building maintenance, PTA, unresolved parent-teacher communication issues.

### Your school **PRINCIPAL:**

- Concerns involving: All unresolved matters communicated to the Assistant Principal

## 504 Office Support

### Section 504 **District Liaisons:** Contact 678-676-1898

- General questions or concerns regarding DCSD Section 504 guidelines, records requests, parent rights, special transportation and other related services.

## Department of Exceptional Education Leadership

### **Special Education Director:** *Dr. Erin Broyard-Baptiste /erin\_broyard-baptiste@dekalbschoolsga.org*

- Concerns involving: All unresolved special education concerns and IEP related issues (implementation, meeting concerns, goals/objectives, progress monitoring, services) that have been previously communicated with the appropriate staff at your student's attendance school (see who to contact above first) but have not been addressed to satisfaction.

### **Senior Coordinator for School Psychology:** *Dr. Kimberly Franklin/ kimberly\_franklin@dekalbschoolsga.org*

- Parents should reach out to the Senior Coordinator of School Psychology when there are unresolved concerns that have been appropriately shared with the local school principal or designee that involves psychological services, evaluations, or mental health support for a child.

### **Senior Coordinator for Section 504/Hospital Homebound:** *Dr. Watina April/watina\_april@dekalbschoolsga.org*

- Parents should contact the Senior Coordinator of Section 504/HHB when their concerns involve ensuring that their child, who has a disability, is receiving appropriate accommodations and protections under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Concerns involving 504 plan development, eligibility, implementation or disability-based discrimination may require District level support.

### **Executive Director of Exceptional Education:** *Mrs. Kiana King/ kiana\_king@dekalbschoolsga.org*

- Parents should reach out to the Executive Director of Exceptional Education when there is a need for leadership-level intervention or advocacy to ensure their child receives appropriate and equitable educational services.

## General Parent Support

### The Ga. Dept. of Education **Special Education HELP DESK:** Contact 404-656-3393

- General questions about Section 504, Special Education and related services, statewide initiatives, rules, projects, outreach, processes, and support agencies for students with disabilities.

# Parent Mentors

Support. Advise. Educate.



## What is a Parent Mentor?

Parent Mentors are parents of children with disabilities, hired by the District, to support other families in their county by providing resources and education to help parents of students with disabilities navigate special education services and supports. They support family engagement and work with special education directors and staff to increase parent participation in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and school programs and events.

## Why should I contact the Parent Mentor?

- I need to talk to another parent that understands and will listen to my educational concerns.
- I need help locating resources that will help me support my child.
- I have questions about my child's education program and how to be engaged in the process.
- I am unsure what my child may need to graduate and options after high school.
- I worry that my child will struggle with transitions to new schools.
- I would like to know what family engagement activities, events and parent training's are available.

Contact your DeKalb County  
Parent Mentors today!



SCAN!  
ME!