

# School Accommodations for Pain-Predominant Functional Gastrointestinal Disorders

The symptoms of pain-predominant functional gastrointestinal disorders (p-FGIDs) or “functional abdominal pain disorders” can be unpredictable and may vary in severity. There are four types of p-FGIDs: functional abdominal pain syndrome, irritable bowel syndrome, functional dyspepsia, and abdominal migraines. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or constipation. These conditions are chronic, and their symptoms often wax and wane.

Children with p-FGIDs may miss school for medical appointments, illness, symptom flare-ups, and side effects of treatment. It is important for children to remain engaged in their normal daily activities, including attending school, even during symptom flares. However, students may need tailored support to help them manage their symptoms while at school

and reduce absenteeism. Often this type of support is sought via a formal accommodation plan called a “Section 504 Plan”.

## What is a Section 504 Plan?

- Section 504, part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is a civil rights act that protects the civil and constitutional rights of persons with disabilities.
- A Section 504 Plan is an action plan developed by the school, parents/guardians, and student. The plan attempts to prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities so that they may achieve their academic goals. The plan should contain a list of accommodations or adjustments required to ensure that a child with a chronic medical condition is treated fairly and has the same access to education as other students. This



law typically applies to public schools, but it can also apply to private schools if the school receives federal funding.

## What types of accommodations are recommended?

Accommodations should be based on each individual's needs. Common recommendations include:

- Unlimited bathroom access
- Ability to leave the classroom to take medications as needed
- Ability to take brief breaks (10–15 minutes each) from the classroom to practice stress and pain management techniques
- Thoughtful reduction of make-up work and/or extended deadlines following absences

## How should I get a Section 504 Plan?

- Contact your child's school about developing a Section 504 Plan. Submit the initial request in writing.
- Get a letter/note from your child's doctor that explains the child's diagnosis, associated physical symptoms, and suggested accommodations.

- Meet with the guidance counselor or relevant point person within the school (i.e., Director of Special Services) to discuss development of a Section 504 Plan.
- Ensure that all of your child's teachers are aware of and understand the Section 504 Plan. Consistent implementation of the plan is a shared responsibility, and clear communication about your child's health situation and education needs is important. Include anything in the plan that you think your child may need for the year (even if the child is currently doing well). Changes to the plan can be made at the school's discretion and/or the parent's request throughout the year.
- The plan is only valid for one year. Therefore, a plan must be created or updated annually even if your child has had no changes in their diagnosis or health status.

## References:

**American's with Disability Act:** [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

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**IMPORTANT REMINDER:** This information from the North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN) is intended only to provide general educational information as a definitive basis for diagnosis or treatment in any particular case. It is very important that you consult your doctor about your specific condition.

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