

## **ADHD, Education and Student's Rights**

As a mother of a 15-year-old son diagnosed with ADHD, I was pleased to learn about recent guidance issued by the Federal Department of Education. According to this [Los Angeles Times article](#), the department sent a letter to U.S. school districts stating that "schools must obey existing civil rights law to identify students with the [ADHD] and provide them with accommodations to help them learn."

Specifically, the guidance states that every public school district must provide equal educational opportunity under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. In practice, schools are responsible for identifying students with the ADHD and supporting them by recording lectures, highlighting passages of textbooks or giving them extra time on tests, and developing a written plan of support for these children.

When I think back about my own family's journey of learning ADHD, I can only think that the Department's guidance will be a boost to families just like mine. You see, when our oldest son was in Kindergarten, he had trouble socializing. He would enter a group by pushing or knocking over another kids sandcastle in the sandbox. That was his way of saying, "I'd like to play with you." He didn't seem to communicate in a positive way with new kids, and we really didn't understand why he behaved this way.

As our son grew older and his school work became more complicated, he continued to have difficulty reading, and writing down the ideas in his head. Fortunately, our school recommended that he undergo educational testing to determine why this bright young boy was sometime "stuck" in his school work and socialization.

After researching licensed psychologists in our area, we found one who was well respected and fun loving. The results of his neuropsychological evaluation revealed that our son had ADHD, Dyslexia and Dysgraphia. The doctor made recommendations to us and to his school, and appropriate accommodations were put in place. For example, our son was given more time to complete assignments, and we started him on medication designed to help him with focus especially to aid his writing. This was only the beginning of the process of monitoring his progress, adding coaching as needed, and continuing to guide him when necessary.

Through my experience as a mother with a child with ADHD, as well as working with my clients' children, I've learned that not all schools and all teachers are educated on the fundamentals of ADHD. The Department of Education's recent guidance is a major step in ensuring that ADHD is recognized in all of our schools, and that every school will follow through and give every student diagnosed with ADHD the accommodations that they are entitled to receive.

