

General Information for Parent/Families with Homebound Students

In general, a student does not always have to have a 504 Plan or an IEP to receive homebound services in Utah.

While an IEP or a 504 Plan is the formal, legally-protected pathway for students with disabilities, Utah's school districts (LEAs) almost always have a process for providing temporary homebound services for general education students based on a medical need. This is often decided by a school/parent team, just as you described.

Here is a breakdown of the two distinct pathways to receiving homebound services.

Pathway 1: Homebound as a Special Education Service (IEP or 504 Plan)

This is the required pathway when a student's medical condition qualifies as a disability under federal law.

- **Who it's for:** Students with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (like attending school or learning) and who require specialized services or accommodations. This includes chronic illnesses, severe mental health conditions, and long-term recovery from major medical events.
 - **Possible Statutes for Compliance:** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
 - **The Decision-Making Team:** A formal IEP Team or 504 Team, which must include the parents.
 - **The Plan:** The services are documented in a legally binding IEP or 504 Plan.
 - **Key Feature:** This pathway provides the student and parent "Procedural Safeguards" like the right to dispute the school's decisions through mediation or a due process hearing.
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Pathway 2: General Education Homebound Services (Temporary Placement)

This is the more common pathway for students who do not have a disability under federal law but are temporarily unable to attend school for a medical reason.

- **Who it's for:** Students with acute, temporary medical conditions. Possible common examples include:
 - Recovery from a major surgery
 - A severe, prolonged illness like mononucleosis or pneumonia
 - A complicated fracture that makes mobility impossible
- **Possible Statutes for Compliance:** This is not based on federal disability law, but rather on local school district (LEA) policy, which is guided by Utah State Board of Education (USBE) rules for pupil accounting (**R277-419**). This rule allows districts to receive state funding for enrolled students receiving instruction at home, provided it is medically necessary.
- **The Decision-Making Team:** A school-based team, often consisting of a school administrator, a school counselor, the parent, and sometimes a teacher. It is less formal than an IEP meeting.
- **The Plan:** The agreement is typically called a "Homebound Instruction Plan" or "Temporary Medical Placement Agreement." It outlines the subjects to be covered, the number of instructional hours per week, and how assignments will be managed.
- **Key Feature:** The primary requirement is a written statement from a medical doctor that confirms the medical necessity of the student being absent from school and provides an estimated duration. This is non-negotiable as it's required for the district's funding and liability. While this path doesn't have the same federal procedural safeguards as an IEP, you still have rights under the district's own policies.

Possible steps for parents

1. **Start with the Doctor:** It is a good idea to start with medical documentation. Ask your doctor to specify why school attendance is not possible and to provide an estimated return date.
2. **Contact the School Counselor:** For temporary situations, the school counselor is usually the best first point of contact. They can provide you with the district's specific forms, requirements, policies and explain their process for general education homebound services.
3. **Know When to Escalate:** If your child's "temporary" condition lasts longer than expected or begins to significantly impact their learning over the long term, it is your right to request an evaluation for a 504 Plan or an IEP. A temporary placement can, and often should, be the bridge to a more formal plan if the need persists.

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