

EDUCATION (GENERAL);

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HOME SCHOOLING REQUIREMENTS

By: Judith Lohman, Chief Analyst

You asked for background on Connecticut's requirements for home schooling as well as several specific questions about home schooling which are answered individually below.

CONNECTICUT'S REGULATION OF HOME SCHOOLING

State Law

Connecticut law requires parents to instruct their children or have them instructed in reading, writing, spelling, English grammar, geography, arithmetic, and United States history and citizenship, including the study of federal, state, and local government (CGS § 10-184). Parents and others having control of any child aged five to 17 must send him to public school in the district where he lives, unless they can demonstrate he is receiving "equivalent instruction" somewhere else. If the child is five, a parent may sign a form at the local school district office that he is holding the child out of school until age six or, if the child is six, until age seven. Parents may also allow their children to drop out of school once the child turns 16. Local school boards must make sure that school age children living in their districts are taught "in accordance with the provisions of § 10-184" (§ 10-220(a)).

According to the State Board of Education (SBE), parents may educate children at home as long as they show the children are receiving an education program equivalent to that specified in the law.

SBE Policy on Home Schooling

State law does not mandate any particular procedure for regulating home schooling. Instead, a 1994 circular letter from the state education commissioner to local school superintendents (copy attached) suggests procedures for parents and local school districts to follow when parents educate children at home. The suggested policy includes the following:

1. Parents file a form with the local school superintendent stating their intention to teach their child at home and providing basic information about their educational program. The information on the suggested form includes the teacher's name, the subjects to be taught, the days of instruction, and what the teacher's assessment methods will be. The notice remains in effect for one year.

2. The school district makes sure the form is complete and retains it as part of its permanent records. School officials hold an annual portfolio review with parents to determine if they have given the legally required instruction.

The circular letter states that, if the suggested procedure is followed, the requirements of Sections 10-184 and 10-220(a) will be satisfied.

Under the policy, by filing the form, the parent acknowledges full responsibility for the child's education according to the law. By receiving the form, the school district does not signify its approval of the content or effectiveness of the home instruction.

The children of parents who refuse to file the form or to participate in the annual portfolio review may be declared truant but the law does not require parents to follow the SBE policy, file the form, or participate in annual reviews.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Are home-schooled students tested periodically by the system in the town where they reside to ensure they are on track?

No. Home-schooled students and their parents may voluntarily submit to an annual review of a portfolio of the students' work by the school system but they are not required to do so nor are they subject to the Connecticut mastery testing or other testing requirements applicable to students enrolled in public schools.

Does President Bush's new educational initiative (the No Child Left Behind Act) institute any testing requirements for home-schooled youngsters?

No.

What are the rights of a relative who does not feel that a youngster is being properly home-schooled in this situation? In other words, if a grandparent or other relative does not feel that a youngster is receiving proper education during the home schooling process, is there something they can do to initiate state action by the Department of Education or other state agency?

Anyone who believes a child is neglected may report the neglect to the Department of Children and Families. By law, a child may be considered neglected if he is "being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, emotionally, or morally" (CGS § 46b-120 (9)(B)).

Have there been any proposals recently to require minimum standards for educating home-schooled children?

In the 2002 session, the Education Committee raised HB 5535 (copy attached), which would have set such standards and would have enacted the SBE's suggested home-schooling policy into law. The committee held a public hearing on the bill on March 4, 2002 but took no further action on it.

Is there any obligation on the part of the state to provide speech therapy for a youngster who requires it even though the child is home-schooled?

No. Even if a child is identified as being eligible for special education and related services, nothing in the state or federal special education law requires local school boards to provide special education services to children who are not enrolled in public school. Thus, children who go to private school or who are educated at home are not entitled to special education services, such as speech therapy, from their local school districts.

In addition, state law expressly provides that a school district does not have to provide such services to home-schooled students whose parents do not consent (CGS § 10-184a).

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