

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR MILITARY FAMILY READINESS

Homeschool Options by State

Clearinghouse Technical Assistance Team

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Introduction

The Technical Assistance team at the Clearinghouse for Military Readiness at Penn State (Clearinghouse) conducted a search for homeschool information and policies as requested by the School Liaison Program with the Department of the Air Force. This report focuses on the homeschooling laws for states and territories within the United States. Homeschool laws and policies for locations outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) are beyond the scope of this report and have been excluded from the findings.

Background

Homeschooling refers to educating children at their residence or home rather than in traditional public or private school settings. No universal definition of homeschooling exists in U.S. federal law. Instead, each state defines and regulates homeschooling, so laws around homeschooling may vary significantly among states. For example, some states require minimal oversight for homeschool students while other states require parents to follow a structured and regulated framework, so homeschooled students can be tracked.

The NCES National Household Education Survey considers a student to be homeschooled if they meet the following criteria:

1. The student receives education at home instead of in a public or private school.
2. The student's enrollment in public or private schools does not exceed 24 hours a week.
3. The student is not being homeschooled solely due to a temporary illness.

This definition encompasses students who are 5 to 17 years old, which includes students in kindergarten through 12th grade, whose parents have chosen to educate a child at home (Jackson et al., 2021).

Homeschooling, a traditional practice, has become almost mainstream and is rapidly growing worldwide. In the 2021-2022 academic year, about 3.1 million students in the United States, or roughly 6% of school-age children, were homeschooled. This number is up from 2.5 million (3-4%) in 2019. The homeschooling population had been growing at a rate of 2- to 8% annually but saw a sharp increase from 2019 to 2021 (Ray, 2024). Families from diverse backgrounds, including different races, religions, and income

levels, choose homeschooling for various reasons, such as personalized education, academic improvement, safer environments, and value-based teaching (e.g., teaching in a way that matches families' values and beliefs).

Homeschooling also offers significant taxpayer savings as families spend an average of \$600 per student annually versus an expenditure of \$16,446 per pupil annually in public schools. Many minority families are turning to homeschooling, and 41% of homeschoolers are non-White/non-Hispanic. By February 2020, over 9 million Americans had experienced homeschooling (Ray, 2024).

For military families, homeschooling offers consistent education despite frequent relocations, accommodates unique schedules, and leverages mobile-ready options. It allows families to explore and integrate new surroundings into their curriculum. Homeschooling is legal in all states and U.S. territories. However, specific rules apply for homeschooled students when families are stationed overseas as guided by Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) policies (Time4Learning, 2023).

The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is the most comprehensive resource on homeschool laws and policies. HSLDA is a nonprofit organization that advocates for homeschooling and defends the civil rights of homeschoolers. Founded over 40 years ago, HSLDA supports families with legal representation, educational resources, and Compassion grants. Most staff are experienced homeschoolers, and the organization collaborates with lawmakers, donors, and homeschool leaders to advance homeschool freedom (HSLDA, 2024).

The HSLDA website provides detailed information on homeschooling laws for each U.S. state and territory. Users can select their state to find specific legal requirements, such as how to withdraw from public school, mandatory subjects, and testing requirements. The page also includes FAQs on complying with state laws, special education provisions for homeschoolers, and the meaning of regulation levels. The HSLDA website categorizes states based on the level of regulation involved, which can range from no notice required to high regulation.

1. **States Requiring No Notice:** These states do not require parents to notify any school officials about their intent to homeschool. Examples of these states include Texas and Oklahoma. Parents have significant autonomy, and there are minimal testing or curriculum approval requirements.
2. **States with Low Regulation:** States like California, Nevada, and Georgia require some basic notification to local school districts but have minimal additional requirements. They may specify that certain subjects must be taught but do not impose stringent testing or record-keeping obligations.

3. **States with Moderate Regulation:** These states, including Colorado, Virginia, and Florida, require parents to submit an annual notice of intent, keep attendance records, and conduct standardized testing or evaluations of student progress.
4. **States with High Regulation:** States like New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts have the most stringent requirements. They often require detailed notification processes, approval of the homeschool curriculum, regular submission of student work, and standardized testing or use of professional evaluations.

U.S. States and Territories Homeschool Policies

Below is a table of the states and territories with information that may be pertinent to military families who intend to homeschool their children. The information was collected from the HSLDA and the U.S. Department of Education websites. The table is linked to each state's regulations page, which is provided by the U.S. Department of Education, and includes the following information for each state or territory:

- **Methods of homeschooling**
 - Examples of options for homeschooling include, but are not limited to, home-based private schools, private tutors, learning pods, church-related schools, homeschool associations, or an accredited online school. The table indicates the number of homeschool options available in each state, and options range from one to five. For example, Arizona offers one option, while Iowa provides five. In addition, requirements, even within the same state, may be different depending on which homeschool option is chosen. For example, a state may have multiple homeschool methods available (e.g., state statute, private tutor) but may only have teaching or immunization requirements for certain options within that state.
- **Required ages**
 - Generally, eligible students for homeschooling are 5 to 18 years old, but the ages of eligible students are not consistent across all states. For example, in Maryland, children are to be homeschooled between the ages of 5 and 16. In Michigan and Louisiana, the required age ranges from 6 to 18. The table indicates the required compulsory ages by state.
- **Notification requirements**
 - While some states do not require parents to notify state or local education authorities if they homeschool their children (e.g., Alaska, Idaho, Texas), other states, such as Arizona, Florida, and Missouri, require parents to submit a one-time or annual notice of intent to homeschool with basic

information (e.g., names and ages of children, address). Other states (e.g., Pennsylvania, New York, North Dakota) have more stringent regulations and require additional documentation like a proposed curriculum, qualifications of the parents, and/or an annual assessment of the child's academic progress. States such as North Carolina, Ohio, and Washington require parents to provide evidence of student progress, which is evidenced through standardized test scores, a portfolio of the student's work, or an evaluation by a certified teacher. The states with the most stringent policies, such as New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont, may require detailed record keeping, frequent assessments of student progress, and potentially home visits by education officials. Further, some states may specify certain qualifications that the homeschooling parents must meet. Notification requirements may vary within the same state depending on the homeschool option that is chosen. If there is a variation in a state, it is indicated in the table.

- **Teacher certification requirements**
 - In some states, parents who homeschool their children may need to have specialized prerequisites or fulfill specific criteria in order to qualify for home education. In other states, no notification or qualifications are required, and parents can homeschool freely without needing to meet any certification or educational qualifications. In yet other states, parents may need to possess at least a high school diploma or a GED (General Educational Development). In states that have more stringent regulations, parents must meet one of several qualifications (e.g., have 45 college quarter credits, complete a parent-qualifying course, work with a certified teacher, be deemed qualified by the local school district superintendent). States that have teacher certification requirements are indicated in the table.
- **Curriculum subject requirements**
 - States may specify what subjects (e.g., English, math, science) must be taught to students who are educated at home. Some states, like Texas and Indiana, have minimal subject mandates. Other states, like New York and Pennsylvania, require comprehensive instruction in subjects such as English, math, science, and social studies. States, such as Colorado and Georgia, fall in the middle and specify essential subjects but list fewer regulations than high-regulation states. States with specific subject requirements are indicated in the table.
- **Immunization requirements**
 - Immunization requirements for homeschooling vary by state. Some states mandate that homeschooled students follow the same immunization requirements as public and private school students, while others have no

requirements. Additionally, most states offer medical, religious, or philosophical exemptions for opting out of receiving immunizations.

- **Access to extracurricular activities**

- The availability of extracurricular activities such as sports teams, clubs, or performing arts for homeschool students varies significantly depending on the state, school district, and specific policies of individual schools. States have differing terminology for these activities, such as "extracurricular," "cocurricular," "curricular," "interscholastic," "program," and "activity," so one must understand the language each state or district uses to define these activities. Some states have laws that specifically permit homeschooled students to join public school sports teams, clubs, and other activities (e.g., Colorado, Florida, Iowa). However, even within states that allow participation, the policies can differ from one school district to another. In addition, homeschooled students often need to meet the same eligibility requirements as public school students including meeting academic standards (e.g., having a certain grade point average), demonstrating residency requirements (i.e., living within the district's geographic boundaries), and compliance with state homeschooling regulations (e.g., meeting state requirements to qualify for homeschooling such as tracking attendance). Districts may require a special application that provides proof of residency, educational records, or other documentation prior to allowing a student to participate in extracurricular activities.

Table 1*U.S. States and Territories Homeschool Policies*

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Alabama	3	6-17	Yes	Only for private-tutor option	No	Only for private-school option	Determined by district
Alaska	4	7-16	Only for religious private- school option	Only for private tutor option	No	Only for religious private-school option	Yes
American Samoa	1	5-18	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Determined by district
Arizona	1	6-16	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Arkansas	1	5-17	Yes	No	No	No	Yes

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
California	3	6-18	Yes	Only for private-tutor option	Yes	No	No (with exceptions)
Colorado	3	6-17	Yes	Only for certified- teacher option	Yes	Yes	Yes
Connecticut	1	5-18	No	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Delaware	3	5-16	Yes	No	No	No	Determined by district
District of Columbia	1	5-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Determined by district

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Florida	3	6-16	Only for state-statute option	Not for parents	No	No	Yes
Georgia	1	6-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Guam	1	5-18	No	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Hawaii	1	5-18	Yes	No	No, but see other requirements	No	Determined by district
Idaho	1	7-16	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Illinois	1	6-17	No	No	Yes	No	Determined by district

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Indiana	1	7-18	No	No	No	No	Determined by district
Iowa	5	6-16	Only for annual assessment, supervising teacher, or Home School Assistance Program options	No	Only for the Independent Private Instruction option	Only for annual assessment, supervising teacher, or Home School Assistance Program options	Allowed for annual assessment, supervising teacher, or Home School Assistance Program options which are considered “Duel enrollment”
Kansas	1	7-18	First year only	No	No	No	Yes

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Kentucky	1	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Louisiana	2	5-18	Yes	No	Only for the home-study program option	Only for the home-study program option	Yes, with principal approval
Maine	2	6-17	Yes	Only for private- school option	Yes	Only children “entering a school”	Yes
Maryland	4	5-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Massachusetts	1	6-16	Yes	No	Yes	No	Determined by district

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Michigan	2	6-18	Only for nonpublic- school option	Only for nonpublic- school option	Yes	No	Yes
Minnesota	1	7-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mississippi	1	6-17	Yes	No	No	No	Determined by district
Missouri	1	7-17	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Montana	1	7-16	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Determined by district
Nebraska	1	6-18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Determined by district
Nevada	1	7-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
New Hampshire	1	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
New Jersey	1	6-16	No	No	No, but see other requirements	No	Determined by district
New Mexico	1	5-18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New York	1	6-16/17	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
North Carolina	1	7-16	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Determined by district
North Dakota	2	7-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Determined by district
Northern Marianas Islands	1	5-17	Yes	No	No	No	Determined by district

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Ohio	2	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Oklahoma	1	5-18	No	No	No	No	Determined by district
Oregon	1	6-18	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Pennsylvania	4	6-18	Yes	Only for the homeschool- statute option	Yes	Yes	Yes
Puerto Rico	1	5-18	No	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Rhode Island	1	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
South Carolina	3	5-17	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
South Dakota	1	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Tennessee	3	6-17	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Texas	1	6-19	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Utah	1	6-18	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Vermont	1	6-16	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Virgin Islands	1	5-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Determined by district
Virginia	4	5-18	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Washington	2	8-18	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
West Virginia	3	6-17	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Wisconsin	1	6-18	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

States/ Territories	Homeschool Options	Required Ages for School	Notification Required	Teacher Qualifications Required	State- Mandated Subjects	Immunization Requirements	Access to extracurricular activities
Wyoming	2	7-16	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Note. From HSDLA, 2024, <https://hslida.org>.

SAT/ACT Testing Availability and Support

All U.S. states and territories allow homeschooled students to register and take the SAT or ACT by following the usual registration procedures and selecting a testing center within their state of residence. For registration guidance, the [College Board website](#) provides information on SAT test dates, locations, and registration, while [ACT, Inc.](#), offers similar details for the ACT test on its website.

Regarding test preparation, homeschooled students can access free online preparation courses from websites like Khan Academy for the SAT and the official ACT website. Local libraries and educational centers often provide study guides and other preparatory materials, and private tutoring services from companies like Kaplan, Princeton Review, or local tutoring centers are also available. Additionally, homeschooling associations and support groups often offer resources, support, and information on standardized testing.

Participation in U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps

All states in the United States are required to allow homeschooled students to participate in U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) as of December 20, 2019. Public Law 116-92, Section 513, mandates that public secondary schools with JROTC units must allow homeschooled students in their area to join if they meet the unit's qualifications. This law states the following:

“PUBLIC LAW 116–92 SEC. 513. INCLUSION OF HOMESCHOOLED STUDENTS IN JUNIOR RESERVE OFFICERS’ TRAINING CORPS UNITS.

Section 2031 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

‘(g)(1) Each public secondary educational institution that maintains a unit under this section shall permit membership in the unit to homeschooled students residing in the area served by the institution who are qualified for membership in the unit (but for lack of enrollment in the institution).

‘(2) A student who is a member of a unit pursuant to this subsection shall count toward the satisfaction by the institution concerned of the requirement in subsection (b)(1) relating to the minimum number of student members in the unit necessary for the continuing maintenance of the unit” (US Government Publishing Office, 2019).

This amendment ensures that homeschooled students have the same opportunities to participate in JROTC programs as their peers in public schools.

Considerations for Homeschooling

While the above table provides a snapshot of the varying state requirements for homeschooling students, parents may want to examine the considerations below to ensure they offer a comprehensive and compliant education for their children.

Admission and Graduation Requirements

- **State Laws and Regulations:** Understand that each state has its own laws regarding homeschooling, including notification of intent to homeschool, record-keeping, and annual assessments.
- **Curriculum:** Ensure the curriculum you select meets state-education standards. Some states require approval of the curriculum.
- **Credits and Transcripts:** Ensure high school students meet credit requirements for graduation.

- **Diploma:** Determine how your child will receive a high school diploma; your choices include through a homeschooling association, through an accredited online program, or via a GED.

Attendance and Record-Keeping

- **Attendance Records:** Review how to document and maintain attendance records.
- **Documentation:** Develop a plan to document your student's progress. Keeping records of coursework, grades, and extracurricular activities can be important for college admissions and transferring to a public school if needed.

Testing and Assessment

- **Standardized Testing:** Determine if your state mandates your student must participate in annual standardized testing or evaluations, given by certified teachers, to assess their progress.
- **Progress Reports:** Consider planning and implementing regular assessments to track your student's academic development and to identify areas for improvement.

Special Education

- **Special Needs Services:** Research information about the resources and supports your state provides for homeschooled students who have special needs.
- **IEP or 504 Plans:** Determine if and how Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or 504 Plans can be implemented in a homeschool setting.

Other Considerations

- **Support Networks:** Seek out homeschooling groups or co-ops for support, resources, and social interaction.
- **Technology:** Determine availability of online resources, educational apps, and virtual classes to enhance learning.

- **Future Planning:** Consider long-term plans, such as college admissions and career readiness, and how homeschooling will impact these goals.
- **Parental Qualifications:** Assess your readiness and ability to teach various subjects, especially at higher grade levels.
- **Financial Impact:** Evaluate the economic implications, including potential loss of income if a parent leaves the workforce to homeschool.
- **Personal Well-being:** Consider the impact on the parent's personal time and well-being and ensure a life-style balance to prevent burnout.

Advantages of Homeschooling

- **Flexible Schedule:** Tailor learning times to fit the family's lifestyle and the child's learning pace.
- **Individualized Instruction:** Customize the curriculum to suit the child's interests and learning style.
- **Safe Learning Environment:** Avoid potential issues related to bullying, peer pressure, and other school-related stressors.
- **Family Bonding:** Strengthen family relationships through shared learning experiences.

Disadvantages of Homeschooling

- **Time Commitment:** Understand that homeschooling requires significant time and effort from parents, which can create challenges for working parents.
- **Resource Intensive:** Create a financial plan to address the cost of materials, extracurricular activities, and possible lost income if a parent stops working to homeschool their children.
- **Socialization:** Ensure children have ample opportunities to interact with peers and develop social skills.

- **Access to Facilities:** Consider if a lack of access to school resources like laboratories, sports facilities, and specialized instructors would impact your homeschool child and how you would address these challenges.

By considering these factors, parents can make a well-informed decision about homeschooling that aligns with their family's needs and educational goals.

Resources

Coalition for Responsible Home Education

- The Coalition for Responsible Home Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for the interests and well-being of homeschooled children by promoting evidence-based homeschooling practices and policy reforms. It provides various information, including research on homeschooling outcomes, resources for homeschooling families, and guidance on best practices in home education. This organization offers policy recommendations, support for homeschooled students and alumni, and information on legal requirements and educational standards to ensure responsible and effective homeschooling.
- <https://responsiblehomeschooling.org/state-by-state/>

The Home School Legal Defense Association

- The HSLDA is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the legal rights of homeschooling families and promoting homeschooling freedoms. They provide information on legal rights and requirements for homeschooling in various states and offer resources and guidance on compliance with homeschooling laws. They also provide educational resources, legal support, webinars, and publications to help families navigate the homeschooling process effectively and advocate for homeschooling rights at the legislative level.
- <https://hsllda.org/legal>

Additional Assistance

The Technical Assistance Specialists at the Clearinghouse are happy to assist you. We support professionals in making informed decisions about which programs fit specific situations and are worth the investment. Whether connecting you with the resources and tools to conduct a needs assessment in your community, suggesting the best evidence-based program or practice for your situation, or developing an evaluation plan, our team of experts is simply a call or email away.

Please visit our website at www.militaryfamilies.psu.edu or call 1-877-382-9185 to speak with a TA specialist.

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