



Homeschooling

This report summarizes national trends in homeschooling and examines differences in homeschooling regulations across states. Iowa's current regulations are reviewed in detail and contrasted with those in three other states.

Prevalence of Homeschooling

Estimates of the total number of homeschooled children in the United States vary widely.¹ The U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Education compile statistics on the number of homeschoolers in the U.S. Table 1 shows estimates of the number of homeschooled children from various studies.²

Table 1: Estimates of the Number of U.S. Children Schooled at Home: Current Population Survey, National Household Education Surveys

Year	Estimate
1994	356,000
1996	636,000
1999	850,000
2003	1,096,000

These estimates may be low because some homeschooling families refuse to participate in government surveys. The consensus is that the number of homeschoolers is increasing in real numbers and as percentage of total school-age children.

¹ Princiotta, Dan, and Stacey Bielick. "1.1 Million Homeschooled Students in the United States in 2003." Institute of Education Sciences: National Center for Education Statistics. 2 Aug. 2004. U.S. Department of Education. 17 Oct. 2007 <<http://nces.ed.gov/nhes/homeschool/>>.

² Bauman, Kurt J. "Home Schooling in the United States: Trends and Characteristics." U.S. Census Bureau. Aug. 2001. U.S. Census Bureau. 17 Oct. 2007 <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0053.html>>.

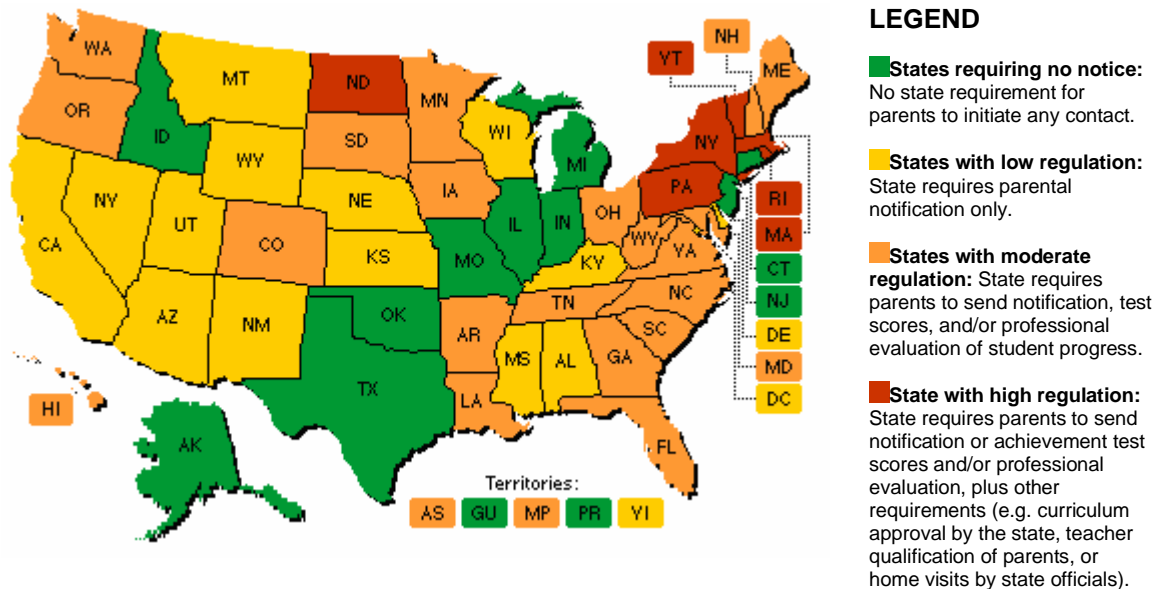
State Comparisons

There are no federal laws that regulate homeschooling, but most states have enacted some regulations. These regulations can be broken down into roughly six categories:

1. Notice of intent to homeschool
2. Teacher qualifications
3. Daily record keeping
4. Student testing/evaluation
5. Curricula requirements
6. Days of instruction requirements

Some states regulate in only a few of these categories, while others regulate in all of them. Ten states do not regulate in any of these areas. The Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) groups states according to the strictness of their homeschooling laws. Figure 1 and Table 2 show the results of their analysis.

Figure 1: State requirements for parents or guardians intending to homeschool their children.³



Iowa falls under the category of moderate regulation.

Table 2: Total number of states per regulatory category.

No Notice Requirements	Low Regulation	Moderate Regulation	High Regulation
10	14	20	6

³ "State Laws." HSLDA: Home School Legal Defense Association. Home School Foundation. 14 Oct. 2007 <<http://www.hsllda.org/laws/default.asp>>.

Iowa's Regulations:

Iowa is considered a state with a moderate amount of homeschooling regulation by the HSLDA.

Under current Iowa law, children must be in school from “age 6 by September 15 until age 16.” If a child begins a school year as 15 and turns 16 after September 15 they must still finish that year.

Two options are offered for homeschooling. Failure to show “adequate progress” and meet the legal requirements under either option can result in the child being enrolled in a public or private school in the area. These regulations can be found in Title VII: Subtitle VI: Chapters 299 and 299A in the Iowa Code.

Option 1:

Under Option 1, students are required to attend 37 days of teaching per quarter, totaling in 148 days per school year. There are no requirements for subjects taught or qualification of the instructor. Two copies of the Competent Private Instruction Report Form (CPI) must be submitted to the local school district by September 15, or within 14 days of removing the student from public school. The CPI form asks for basic information, a list of instructional texts used, and an “outline of course study,” but there is no minimum requirement for this outline. Iowa’s Department of Education produces a CPI handbook to assist homeschooling parents in meeting their obligations in this area. The 2007/2008 version can be freely downloaded from the Iowa Department of Education website at: <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/301/922/>

There are no requirements for daily recordkeeping of coursework completed. A report card or evaluation from an accredited correspondence school, a portfolio of the student’s work, or a nationally-standardized test must be completed by May 1 and submitted to the local district by June 30. A portfolio is reviewed by a licensed Iowa teacher for the appropriate grade level. Under the standardized test option, the student must score above the 30th percentile in all subject areas required for their grade level, or they must show 6 months worth of progress since the last test.

Option 2:

Under Option 2, the homeschool may be supervised by a licensed teacher. The differences from Option 1 are that if the homeschool is supervised (not necessarily taught) by a teacher, he or she must have a valid license. Also, the testing requirements are different: no accredited correspondence school report card, standardized test, or portfolio is required. The student’s family must contact the supervising teacher twice per quarter; one of the two meetings may be done over the telephone. If the student’s parent or guardian is an Iowa licensed teacher for the appropriate grade level they may evaluate their own child’s progress.

Regulations in Selected Other States

Below are summaries of regulations in three other states: one with no regulations, one with low regulations, and one with high regulations. These provide a baseline for comparison with Iowa, a moderate regulation state.

No Regulations– Illinois:

The compulsory age for education in Illinois is “between the ages of 7 and 17 years.” Illinois requires 176 schools days for public schools, but there is no requirement for private or homeschools. The subject requirements in public schools include language arts, biological and physical science, math, social sciences, fine arts, health and physical development. There are no requirements for notice of intent to homeschool, teacher qualifications, recordkeeping, or testing.⁴

Low Regulations – Wisconsin:

The compulsory school age in Wisconsin is “between 6 [by September 1] and 18 years.” Wisconsin requires homeschooled students to receive at least 875 hours of instruction per year. The course requirements are "a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction" in reading, language arts, math, social studies, science and health, and this curriculum does not need to "conflict with the program’s religious doctrines." A letter of intent to homeschool must be submitted to the state Department of Education by October 15 of each school year. There are no requirements for teacher qualifications, recordkeeping, or testing.⁵

High Regulations – New York:

The compulsory school age in New York is "a minor who becomes six years of age on or before the first of December in any school year...until the last day of session in the school year in which the minor becomes sixteen years of age" or completes high school. New York requires 1 through 6 graders to receive 900 hours of instruction per year, and 990 for grades 7 through 12. New York breaks down specific curriculum requirements by grade. The homeschooling instructor must be deemed “competent,” which requires following all of the regulations. Notice of homeschooling must be submitted to the local superintendent by July 1 or within 14 days of starting homeschooling. Each local school district also supplies an Individualized Home Instruction Plan which must be completed and returned to the district. A report must be filed to the superintendent each quarter that details hours of instruction, material covered and a grade or evaluation for each subject. An annual assessment must be filed with the superintendent by June 30 of each year. The assessment must be from an accepted test, given every other year for grades 4 through 8, and every year for grades 9 through 12. Scoring below the 33rd percentile will result in probation for the homeschooling program.⁶

⁴ “HSLDA Home School Laws – Illinois.” HSLDA. <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp?State=IL>.

⁵ “HSLDA Home School Laws – Wisconsin.” HSLDA. <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp?State=WI>.

⁶ “HSLDA Home School Laws – New York.” HSLDA. <http://www.hslda.org/laws/default.asp?State=NY>.

Success of Homeschooled Students

While literature can be found reporting higher success rates for homeschooled students at the college level than average public school students, much of this is produced by organizations which support homeschooling. Broad, relevant, and unbiased information on academic comparisons of homeschooled students and public school students is difficult to find.

Enforcement

Little data exists on how often homeschooling laws go unenforced. Anecdotal evidence shows some online homeschooling forums provide advice on how to avoid meeting requirements of a given state's laws. In states that require no notice of intent to homeschool, it is difficult to accurately determine the number of homeschooled children in a given district, so any curricula requirements appear to be unenforceable. Furthermore, many states have no way of knowing if the information given by homeschools is accurate. For example, in Iowa there is no way to know if the attendance records are being accurately kept.

This report was prepared in October, 2007 by the Iowa Civic Analysis Network (I-CAN), a non-partisan public policy undergraduate research group at the University of Iowa. For additional research on this or other issues, please visit our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ican> or contact us at studorg-i-can@uiowa.edu.