



Strengthening the Voice of California Homeschoolers

Just the Facts

2024 Edition

A Step By Step Guide to Getting Started

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California Homeschool Network (CHN) was founded in 1994 by a statewide group of homeschooling families. We are an inclusive group which means we serve families that choose all homeschooling styles and from all religious and ethnic affiliations. We are an organization of energetic and dedicated homeschooling families working to preserve our own educational freedom and helping families provide an excellent education for their children.

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Alternatives To Public School

Children between the ages of 6 and 18 must be enrolled in a public school or a specified alternative, and that is your decision to make! Kindergarten is not mandatory, but children who turn 6 by September 1st must enroll that school year (*California Education Code §48222, 48224*). Each family has unique needs and circumstances, so choosing an alternative will require considering your individual family situation and the needs of each child.

Your Options

1. Credentialed tutor

A parent with an appropriate current California teacher's credential may teach his/her child under the private tutorial exemption. Parents may also hire a credentialed tutor for their child. Tutors are required to teach for a minimum of 3 hours each day, 175 days per school year, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. (*California Education Code §48224*)

2. Private School

There are two home-based private school options:

- **Establish a Home-Based Private School by filing a Private School Affidavit (PSA)**

You may establish a private school in your home and enroll your child as an alternative to public school. This will give you the ultimate in control over your schedule and curriculum. If you establish a home-based private school, you will be the administrator responsible for record keeping, curriculum and all aspects of your child's education.

- **Enroll in a Private School Satellite Program (PSP)**

PSPs (formerly known as umbrella schools) file a California private school affidavit every year as part of their legal obligation to be in compliance with California Education Code. They can enroll families who want to homeschool. Some PSPs offer classes, both site based and online, curriculum packages and/or activities for their members. Others offer guidance and record keeping, but leave the day-to-day details to the parents. Fees, guidance and requirements vary widely with each school.

LOCATING PSPs

- Ask your CHN Local Contact
- CHN resource page:
www.californiahomeschool.net/homeschooling-resources/psp/
- Check with site-based private schools
- Ask local and online support groups

3. Public ISP/Charter School

Some public schools and charter schools offer independent study. These public programs are funded by tax dollars, so there is no fee to attend. Some offer a set curriculum you do at home or online. Others allow parents to select some materials. The curriculum will be aligned with Common Core and testing is required. If you enroll in one of these programs, you will need to keep the records required by your program and regularly meet with a credentialed teacher to turn in required paperwork. The amount of freedom you have in choosing what to study depends on the program's policies and your assigned teacher.

LOCATING PUBLIC/CHARTER ISPs

- Search the State Charter School Locator:
www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/cs/ap1/imagemap.aspx
- Check with site-based public schools
- Ask local and online support groups

COMPARING HOMESCHOOLING OPTIONS

	Credentialed Tutor	Home-Based Private School	PSP	Public School ISP	Charter School ISP
Is there an enrollment fee?	No, but possibly salary for tutor	No	Yes	No	No
Who chooses curriculum?	Parent/Tutor	Parent	Parent/ Sometimes School	School	School/ Parents may have options
Who pays for curriculum?	Parent	Parent	Parent	Tax payers	Tax payers/ Parent may pay for some things
What is the parent's role?	Parent may be the tutor	Teacher	Teacher	Aide to the teacher	Aide to the teacher
Who assigns grades?	Tutor	Parent	Parent	Teacher	Teacher
Standardized test required?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Are certain days/hours of work specified?	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes



The most important consideration in choosing a program is to find one that respects your authority as the parent and works with you to serve your child's individual educational needs. Ask questions before choosing, and remember that you can change your child's enrollment to a different legal option at any time during the year.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU ENROLL

<p><u>Public ISP/Charter schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What curriculum choices are available? ● How often will the student and parent need to meet with the teacher and where? ● What documentation, records and samples of work will need to be turned in? ● Is there a dollar amount of state funds the parent will be allowed to direct spending for, and if so, what curriculum choices and vendors are available? ● What happens if testing is refused? ● What are attendance requirements? 	<p><u>PSPs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How long has the school been in operation? ● What is the administrator's experience with homeschooling (did they homeschool their own children)? ● Do they offer support or local social events? ● Have they filed a PSA with the state of California? ● What are the fees and class/activity offerings? ● What are the record keeping requirements? ● What is required of the students?
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Establishing A Home-Based Private School

You can create a private school in your own home and enroll your own child. A student may be enrolled full time in only one school at a time, so if you enroll your child in one of the other homeschool options such as a PSP, ISP or charter school, you cannot establish a home-based private school and enroll them there too. Education Code sections §48222, §48415, §33190, §51210 and §51220 set the criteria for private schools. Establishing a home-based private school can be done in just a few steps.



A "private school" is any school, whether conducted for profit or not, giving a course of training similar to that given in a public school at or below the twelfth grade, including but not limited to schools owned or operated by any church. -California Vehicle Code §492

1. Compiling School Records

Although private schools are not required to submit records to the state, they are required to keep certain records. The records a private school must keep on file include:

- **Attendance record**

You are required to indicate absences of a half day or more.

- **Faculty qualifications and addresses**

California law states private school instructors must be "capable of teaching." You are required to keep a document stating name and address of your teachers along with a record of the educational qualifications of each instructor.

- **Copy of the completed Private School Affidavit (PSA)**

The administrator of every existing private school must file an affidavit with the Superintendent of Public Instruction between October 1st and October 15th of each year. Details on when and how to file are below.

- **Course of study**

Every private school must have a Course of Study on file. There are many options for using existing documents or creating the course of study yourself. For details, see the Course of Study section below.

- **Cumulative File for each student**

If your child has never been enrolled in any school, you will need to create a cumulative file. If your child previously attended any public or private school, those records will be transferred to your school -see the section on requesting student records below. The cumulative file should include:

1. Legal name of student; date of birth, place of birth and verification of birth date; sex of pupil

(A copy of the birth certificate should contain all information listed above.)

2. Name and address of parent of minor pupil
3. Entering and leaving date of each school year and date of high school graduation or equivalent
4. Subjects taken during each year and marks, grades or credits if given
5. Health and Immunization Records:

Home-based private schools are exempt from immunization requirements, but records are still required. For more information about immunizations, or to download the immunization record form for your file, visit CHN's records page

www.californiahomeschool.net/how-to-homeschool/keeping-private-school-records/ or the State's website shotsforschool.org.

2. Filing a Private School Affidavit

Once you establish a home-based private school, you will file a single form with the California Department of Education providing information about your school. According to the California Department of Education website, a Private School Affidavit (PSA) should be filed by: “Persons, firms, associations, partnerships, or corporations offering or conducting full-time day school at the elementary or high school level for students between the ages of 6 and 18 years.”



“There is nothing in current California law that prevents a parent without a teaching credential from filing a Private School Affidavit pursuant to Education Code section 33190. If a valid affidavit is on file, then a child attending that private school is exempt from public school attendance under Education Code section 48222.” -CDE Policy Statement

When to File

Between October 1 and October 15 of each school year.

- Schools that begin at the first of the school year will wait until October 1 to file their affidavit, even if it is their first filing.
- Schools that start after October 15, but before the end of the current school year, file their affidavit when their school is started.

How To File

The PSA may be completed online at no charge at the California Department of Education website www.cde.ca.gov/psa. If you have trouble filing online, the CDE offers alternative suggestions or you may contact CHN [here](#).

Completing the online PSA form

School Information

- Enter your school’s name, address, phone number, email, county where school is located, and public school district.
- Enter your CDS number if you have one. Only schools with six or more students are issued this number.
- Choose *co-educational* as school type, *day-only* for accommodations and *non-religious* classification.
- Range of grades offered is 1st through 12th and your school may offer a diploma, so mark “yes”.
- If your school name has changed or you have changed districts, answer the appropriate questions.

Statistical Information

- Enter range of ages, if only one student, put that age in both boxes. List only students who will be 6 by Sept 1st.
- List number per grade, or list number of ungraded elementary/secondary. List number of previous year’s grads, if any.
- List staff, counting each adult only once. One full-time teacher and no other staff is perfectly acceptable.

Staff and School Records

- You must list one Administrator, one Director and one Custodian of Records. This can all be the same person.

Tax Status -Select “None of the Above.”

Acknowledgements and Statutory Notices -Check each of the boxes listed in this section indicating your understanding.

Electronic Signature -Enter information required; Print copy of form; Click SUBMIT; Print a copy of confirmation page.

CHN step by step guide: www.californiahomeschool.net/how-to-homeschool/establishing-your-psa/

3. Course of Study and Curriculum

If you are operating your own home-based private school, you will need a Course of Study in your files. A Course of Study is your plan for the year and it can be as specific or general as you want. It may be revised at any time. Search “homeschool course of study” for ideas that have worked for other homeschoolers.

Choosing Curriculum

Curriculum can be purchased in comprehensive packages, or you can piece together your own curriculum by choosing the subjects you will cover for each student and the materials you will use to learn the subjects.

- Instruction must be primarily in English (*California Education Code §48222*)
- Instructions must be offered in the several branches of study required to be taught in the public schools found in Education Code §51210 at leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml. Just as in the public schools, a private school must *offer* subjects, but students may select which ones they want.
- The materials and methods you use to teach these areas are up to you. You are not required to use state approved textbooks or to use textbooks at all. Online resources, library books, activities, field trips and classes may all be used.

Important note about Correspondence Schools: There are correspondence and distance learning schools that are available throughout the country. If the school does not file an affidavit in California, then enrollment in their program will only provide the curriculum and course of study, but will not meet the requirements for compulsory attendance in California. If you choose to use one of those schools, your child will still need to be enrolled in a PSP, your home based private school, or covered by the tutor option.

4. Withdrawing a Student

If your child has been enrolled in a private or public school, you will need to contact the previous school to formally withdraw the child. This applies even if the previous school was a PSP, ISP or home-study program. You may call the school or go to the school office to tell them. Failing to do so may result in the school assuming your child is absent or truant. (*California Education Code Section §49068*)

5. Requesting Student Records

After you have withdrawn your child, mail or fax a letter from your school to the prior school and request your students’ records. If the records are not sent, you have met your obligation and can continue homeschooling and maintaining your school file.

Sample Letter Requesting Student Records

(date)

(name and address of previous school)

Re: *(student name)*

DOB: *(student's date of birth)*

Dear Registrar:

This letter is to inform you that *(student name)*, date of birth *(xx/xx/xxxx)*, has enrolled at *(name of your private school)*. Please send *(his/her)* cumulative file to this school at the address below, pursuant to California Education Code section 49068.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

(Your name)

(Your title, such as: School Secretary or School Administrator)

(Your private school's name, unless included in letterhead)

(Your private school's mailing address, unless included in letterhead)



Homeschooling With Confidence

What about socialization?

There are plenty of opportunities for homeschoolers to socialize. Because they have continual interaction and modeling from adults, homeschooled children are often less peer-dependent and more comfortable with all age groups than their public school counterparts.

- [CHN Local Contacts](#) can tell you about support groups, park days, and activities in your area
- Online support groups can help you connect with local homeschoolers in your area
- CHN offers Campouts, the CHN Expo and special events
- Join community activities like sports or scouts
- Enroll in specialty classes in music, gymnastics, martial arts, theater...
- Arrange after-school play groups

Are there different approaches to homeschooling?

Absolutely! There is a whole continuum of homeschooling approaches from something that resembles the structured school classroom to supporting children in pursuing their own interests.

What is a typical day like?

There is no typical day. You might be home and crack the books or play games. You might race off to a support group activity. You may take a walk, play some basketball, go grocery shopping, or just read a good book. Some parents do a little of each subject every day. Others spend one day on math, another on language arts, and so on. Some families use a planned curriculum and others utilize the library and follow the interests of their children.

How long has homeschooling been around?

Homeschooling or family-based education has been the primary mode of education for most of recorded history. Though familiar to most of us today, institutionalized schooling is actually relatively new. In fact, the last compulsory education laws in the United States weren't passed until 1918. The modern homeschooling movement, which was a return to family-based education, began in the 1960's.

Does homeschooling provide the same diversity found in public schools?

Yes! Americans of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and religions homeschool, and they regularly meet with each other at park days throughout the state. Homeschooled children also have the opportunity to be out in their community more often, where they meet and observe many different people.

What about getting into college?

If a homeschooler wants to pursue post-secondary education, they can certainly do so and homeschooling does not prevent them from being accepted at some of the finest universities!

Can I really do this?

Thousands of other parents of all educational backgrounds are successfully homeschooling. Whatever decision you make is yours to change, and help is available!

- Our web site www.CaliforniaHomeschool.net has information on all aspects of homeschooling
- CHN offers online email support lists www.californiahomeschool.net/about/chn-mailing-lists/
- CHN offers support on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CaliforniaHomeschoolNetwork>



CHN Is Here To Help

What to do if you are contacted about your choice to homeschool

Occasionally a family will be contacted by a school, a truancy officer or CPS asking about their child's enrollment in school. This is rare and is usually a result of unusual circumstances such as failure to notify the prior school, a contentious divorce custody situation, or a complaint or question from someone that must then be followed up on. Whether someone shows up at your door, or you get a letter or phone call, stay calm, deal with the immediate situation, and if you have questions, contact CHN by phone at 800-327-5339 or email the details to legal@californiahomeschool.net

Here are some suggestions for various scenarios:

- **You receive a letter:** Read it carefully. Is it simply informing you of something, or is there a threat? If you have questions, email CHN's legal committee volunteers any time day or night.. Do not ignore letters. They almost always require a response. Including a copy of the letter in your email to CHN is helpful.
- **You receive a phone call:** Ask what it is in regard to and if you are busy teaching or helping your children, take a message. Be professional and courteous, but firm, remembering that it is your home they are calling, and any call can be returned at your convenience. If you have questions about the call, contact CHN.
- **Someone is at your door:** Consider a family policy that you *never* open your door to uninvited guests. That is not a homeschooling rule; that's a "we no longer live in the safe olden days" rule. Some families have "we don't answer our door if we aren't expecting you" small laminated notes on their front doors. You might want to make one (it also discourages door-to-door solicitors!). It's not likely that the knock on the door will be homeschool related, but if it is, the person will leave a business card with a note on it.

No one is authorized to visit and evaluate your school.

Public school personnel have only *two* authorities with respect to private schools:

1. If you are contacted by an attendance officer, they may verify the enrollment of a particular student by inquiring about that student *by name*.
2. They may also verify that a private school has filed an affidavit as required by law, by contacting the California Department of Education. As a courtesy, you may show your PSA or offer your online link. You aren't required to, but it might help resolve the issue more quickly.

Download a copy of this publication for FREE!

Visit CHN's web site www.CaliforniaHomeschool.net and print out your free copy for reference.

Contact Us.

Use our [Contact Us](#) page if you have any questions or concerns about your homeschooling.

Your Membership in CHN Supports California Homeschooling

The California Homeschool Network was founded to aid you in having a successful homeschool experience. It is through our combined group efforts that we can help California's homeschoolers with our statewide support lists, annual Family Expo, legal support, legislative monitoring, camping trips, publications and outreach efforts. Please consider joining CHN and help us continue fulfilling our motto:

Strengthening the Voice of California Homeschoolers