

General information for colleges, universities, technical schools, and cosmetology schools regarding the efficacy of a parent-issued high school diploma from a homeschool program in compliance with a state's homeschool law.

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Homeschool graduates from a home education program in compliance with their state's home education law are eligible for federal student aid, and for admission to an institution of higher education, for the following five reasons:

First, the U.S. Congress has affirmed the validity of a homeschool graduate's high school diploma by making it clear that a graduate of a home education program is eligible for federal student aid (as discussed below), and by establishing that a homeschool graduate's high school diploma is valid for enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces (*see, e.g.*, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Pub. L. No. 112-81, § 525, 125 Stat. 1298, 1403 (2011)). In addition, homeschool graduates are eligible for admission to the U.S. Military Service Academies.¹

Second, the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 [20 U.S.C. § 1091(d)(1)(B)] prohibits colleges who receive federal funds from requiring an accredited high school diploma or GED in order for a student to be eligible for federal financial aid if “the student has completed a secondary school education in a home school setting that is treated as a home school or private school under State law.”

Third, the U.S. Department of Education states, in the *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, that a homeschool student “may self-certify...that they have completed secondary school through home schooling as defined by state law.” The U.S. Department of Education states further “[y]ou may rely on a homeschooled student's self-certification that they completed secondary school in a homeschool setting.” *See* Vol. 1, Chapter 1 of the 2023–24 Federal Student Aid Handbook, pages 9 and 11. This document can be found at: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/2023-2024/vol1/ch1-school-determined-requirements>.

Pages 6-7 of the *2015–16 Counselors and Mentors Handbook on Federal Student Aid: A Guide for Those Advising Students About Financial Aid for Higher Education* describes homeschool eligibility as follows: “Additionally, to be eligible for federal student aid, a student must ... have a high school diploma or its equivalent, or have been

¹ *See, e.g.*, U.S. Air Force Academy (<https://www.academyadmissions.com/prepare/high-school/homeschoolers/>); U.S. Military Academy at West Point (<https://www.west-point.org/academy/malowa/educators/HomeSchool.html>); U.S. Naval Academy (<https://www.usna.edu/Admissions/Apply/Home-Schooled-Candidates.php>); U.S. Coast Guard Academy (<https://www.home-school.com/Articles/raising-an-officer.php>).

homeschooled and either (1) have a secondary school completion credential for homeschools as provided for under state law, or (2) if the state does not require the credential described above, have completed a secondary school education in a homeschool setting that qualifies as an exemption from the compulsory attendance requirements under state law[.]” This document can be found at: <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/resources/counselors-handbook-2015-16.pdf>.

Pages 12-13 of the *2023–24 Counselors and Mentors Handbook on Federal Student Aid: A Guide for Those Advising Students About Financial Aid for Higher Education* says the same: “To meet the general eligibility requirements for federal student aid, a student must ... show that they are qualified to obtain a college or career school education by ... having been homeschooled and either (1) have a secondary school completion credential for homeschools as provided for under state law, or (2) if the state does not require the credential described above, have completed a secondary school education in a homeschool setting that qualifies as an exemption from the compulsory attendance requirements under state law[.]” This document can be found at: <https://financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/resources/2023-24-counselors-handbook.pdf>.

Fourth, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate Committee Reports accompanying Public Law No. 105-244 (reauthorization of the Higher Education Act) are particularly helpful when looking at homeschool graduate admissions. These Reports, which demonstrate the intent of Congress, encourage colleges and universities receiving federal funding to discontinue discrimination against homeschoolers, such as requiring homeschool graduates to take the GED. The House Report specifically recommends that colleges and universities change any admissions policies which require homeschool students to take additional tests beyond what is required of traditionally schooled students, including the GED:

“The Committee is aware that many colleges and universities require applicants from nonpublic, private, or nontraditional secondary programs **(including homeschoolers)** to submit scores from additional standardized testing... (GED or... SAT II) in lieu of a transcript/diploma from an accredited high school... Given that standardized test scores (ACT or SAT) and portfolio or performance-based assessments may also provide a sound basis for admission decision regarding these students, the Committee recommends that colleges and universities consider using these assessments for applicants in nonpublic, private, and nontraditional programs rather than requiring them to undergo additional types of standardized testing. Requiring additional testing only of students educated in these settings could reasonably be seen as discriminatory... **The Committee believes that college admissions should be determined based on academic ability of the student and not the accreditation status of the school in which he or she received a secondary education.**” (105th Congress, second session, House of Representatives Report 105-481,

Higher Education Amendments of 1998, April 17, 1998, page 147.)
(emphasis added)

Fifth and finally, the number of home education students continues to grow. These are hardworking, high achieving, motivated graduates who will bring honor to institutions of higher education. In an era of declining demographics and more students seeking alternatives to higher education, institutions of higher education will greatly benefit from actively recruiting homeschool graduates and removing unnecessary barriers to entry.

We hope that this information is helpful to you and your institution. If you would like to discuss this, or need additional information, please contact Will Estrada, HSLDA Senior Counsel, 540-338-5600, will.estrada@hsllda.org.