



Christian Home Educators Association of California

Promote • Provide • Protect

Options for Homeschooling in California

Compulsory Education Laws

Under the California Education Code, all children between the ages of six and 18 must attend a public full-time day school unless they are exempted (E.C. § 48200). Parents are confronted with the decision of how to comply with the compulsory education laws.

The four most common alternatives that apply to homeschoolers are listed below:

1. Start your own private school.
2. Enroll in Private School Satellite Program (PSP).
3. Use a tutor.
4. Enroll in a charter school or independent study through the public school.

Each of these options will be discussed separately below.

1. Starting Your Own Private School

Home educators may legally establish private schools in their own homes. These schools must comply with the same laws that apply to all private schools, including filing a Private School Affidavit each year. The requirements are discussed in detail in chapter two of The California Homeschool Manual.

2. Enrolling in a PSP

A PSP must meet the same legal requirements as all other private schools, so before enrolling, you should become familiar with the requirements of a private school and ask questions to make sure the program is in compliance. PSPs may be composed entirely of homeschoolers or may be an extension program of a campus-based private school.

Private School Requirements

File an annual Private School Affidavit

"offer instruction in the several branches of study [i.e., subjects] required to be taught in the public schools" (E.C. § 48222)

The instructor(s) must be "capable of teaching." (E.C. § 48222)

Attendance "of the pupils shall be kept ... in a register ..." (E.C. § 48222)

3. Using a Private Tutor

Private tutoring requires a California credentialed teacher. The credential must be for the appropriate grade level and teaching must be in the courses of study required in the public schools. Tutoring must be done for at least three hours a day for at least 175 days per year. (E.C. § 48224)

Most homeschool parents who have teaching credentials choose to operate as private schools even though they qualify as tutors. The reason is the time requirement. Private schools have no set requirement for teaching a particular number of hours or days, while private tutors do. Thus the day-to-day recordkeeping is easier for a private school.

4. Enrolling in a Charter School or Public School ISP When your children attend a charter school or public school independent study program (ISP), they are not “exempt” from the compulsory attendance law, they are in compliance with it. This is because these programs are public schools. When your children enroll, they are public school students. State law requires that the students in these programs must be under the “exclusive control of the officers of the public schools.” (E.C. § 47612(a)) This means that while parents may be involved in the day-to-day supervision of the child’s schoolwork, all final decisions are made by the public school official in charge. Additionally, a signed agreement is required specifying minimum requirements. Also, regular standardized tests are required and specified academic progress must be maintained or the program risks losing funding.

As you review the alternatives, consider why you want to homeschool, the “why” will affect your choices.

Some reasons families homeschool are to allow personalized curriculum/approaches, to provide Christ as the foundation for education (discipleship), or to meet special education needs. For more information on understanding your reasons for homeschooling and how they affect your choices, visit www.cheaofca.org.

Private Tutor Requirements

May be tutored by a state-certified private tutor and instructed “for at least three hours a day for 175 days each calendar year” between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. (E.C. § 48224)

Charter School Requirements

“No public money shall ever be used for the support of any sectarian or denominational school ... nor shall any sectarian or denominational doctrine be taught, or instruction thereon be permitted, directly or indirectly, in any of the common schools of this State.” (Article IX, Section 8, California State Constitution)

“a charter school shall be nonsectarian in its programs, admission policies, employment practices, and all of the operations ...” (E.C. § 47605[d])

“The State Department of Education shall not apportion funds to a local education agency for a pupil in an independent study program if that agency has provided any funds or other things of value to the pupil or his or her parent or guardian that the agency does not provide to pupils who attend regular classes or to their parents or guardians.” (E.C. § 46300.6)

For more in-depth information about your options for home education in California, subscribe to our weekly e-newsletter at www.cheaofca.org.

CHEA of California is dedicated to providing information, training, and support to parents desiring to give their children a Christian education at home.

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