



# Start·a·School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

## North Carolina

### Home School

North Carolina law defines a home school as a non-public school consisting of the children of not more than two families or households, where the parents or legal guardians or members of either household determine the scope and sequence of the academic instruction, provide academic instruction, and determine additional sources of academic instruction. [General Statute 115C-563\(a\)](#) as amended changes the definition of a home school to allow parents to hire tutors, let their children participate in group settings where they receive instruction (co-ops, 4-H classroom instruction, etc.) and be instructed by an expert that is not a part of the household in the established homeschool (apprenticeships, a homeschool doctor teaching biology, etc.) This will allow homeschool parents more freedom to choose what is best for the education of their children.

The North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education (DNPE) is authorized by state law to receive home school notices of intent to begin initial operation and to terminate operation, and to annually inspect the school's student attendance and nationally standardized achievement test result records. Chief Administrators of home schools should anticipate receiving a request(s) to meet with a DNPE representative at a public location in close proximity to the home school while the home school is in operation

### Requirements

Parents/guardians residing in North Carolina and desiring, in lieu of conventional school attendance, to home school their school-age children must:

- Hold at least a high school diploma or its equivalent.
- Send to DNPE a [Notice of Intent to Operate a Home School](#). The notice must include the name and address of the school along with the chief administrator.
  - Instructions for Selecting a Home School Name:
    - When selecting your school name, choose an academic name appropriate for inclusion on the student's future high school diploma which would be provided by your school.
    - Keep in mind that DNPE will NOT be able to accommodate requests later for a change of school name in the division's files.

- School name length should not exceed 30 characters (including spaces and punctuation).
  - To avoid duplication and confusion, do not use the following words in the name: Charter, college, elementary, grade, grammar, high, incorporated (or Inc.), junior, kindergarten, lower, middle, primary, public, residence, schooling, secondary, seminary, senior, the, university, or upper.
  - Please avoid using names of public or private schools in your area, or using the name of the instructional program/online service you are using.
  - Any school submitting its Notice of Intent without providing a school name will automatically be assigned a school name beginning with the last name of the chief administrator followed by the word "School."
- Elect to operate under either [Part 1](#) or [Part 2 of Article 39](#) of the North Carolina General Statutes as a religious or as a non-religious school.
  - Operate (conduct instruction in) the home school on a regular schedule for at least nine calendar months of the year, excluding holidays and vacations.
  - Maintain at the school [disease immunization](#) and annual [attendance](#) records for each student.
  - Have a [nationally standardized achievement test](#) administered during each academic year to each student. The test must involve the subject areas of English grammar, reading, spelling and mathematics. Records of the test results must be retained at the home school for at least one year and made available to DNPE when requested. The first standardized test must be administered within the academic year of the home school start date, and then annually thereafter.
  - Notify DNPE when the school is no longer in operation.

## **Reminders**

1. To avoid needless delays, always check [this page for the latest updates to the Notice of Intent](#) sending your notice.
2. Please DO NOT send a Notice of Intent to DNPE for the present school year if the only students to be enrolled in your home school: (a) are currently under age 7 and will not turn age 7 in the present/current school year, or (b) are currently 18 years of age or older.
3. Please send your [Notice of Intent](#) five days prior of your home school's initial opening date. If any of your children will turn age 7 before this coming June 1, please send your [Notice of Intent](#) at least 5 days before the child's 7th birthday. One Notice per school, please -- not per student.
4. No Notices of Intent are accepted in May and June. If your home school will operate only during the summer months, DO NOT send a Notice of Intent to DNPE.
5. The State of North Carolina home school statistical year begins each July 1 and concludes the following June 30. Therefore, do not file your [Notice of Intent](#) until after July 1 of the home school statistical year in which your home school will begin initial operation.
6. In continuing your school from year to year, do not again send a Notice to DNPE unless you have previously notified DNPE that your school was terminated. IF it was previously

terminated and you are now re-opening it, answer "Yes" to question 1 and then, on that same line, give the former county if it will now be in a different one. Give the current county on line 2.

7. When selecting your school name, choose an academic name appropriate for inclusion on the student's future high school diploma which would be provided by your school. Keep in mind that DNPE will NOT be able to accommodate requests later for a change of school name in the division's files.
8. A reminder that the State of North Carolina has no legal authority outside of its geographical borders. Consequently, if the student is living outside of the geographical borders of the State of North Carolina, DO NOT send a Notice of Intent form to DNPE.
9. In order to expedite the processing of [Notices of Intent](#), please do not submit your Notice until you are certain that your home school will definitely begin operation. Sending a Notice of Intent and then withdrawing it several days/weeks later creates an unnecessary additional workload for our office staff.
10. If a home school does not meet all legal requirements for such a school, DNPE notifies the local public school superintendent that the North Carolina compulsory school attendance law is not being satisfied. The local public school superintendent then takes appropriate action.
11. A home school that has met the legal requirements for such a school is a non-public school. Consequently, a photocopy of the student's cumulative record from his/her previous school may be obtained and kept at the site of the home school if the parent so desires. The last public or private educational institution which the student attended should retain the original record.
12. DNPE suggests that before finalizing plans for establishing a home school, you first consult with the chief administrator of the local conventional school (public or private) which your child would otherwise be attending. Ask him/her how he/she would handle the grade placement of your child should you decide later to terminate your home school and enroll your child in that school. The initial point of student entry into the North Carolina public school system is the kindergarten level.
13. When sending your [Notice of Intent](#) to DNPE, always include diploma documentation for all persons named as a provider of academic instruction. Be sure to include the name of the parent/legal guardian who is usually with the student during the day while other area children are normally attending local schools.
14. Do not withdraw your child from his/her present school or begin your school until you have received written acknowledgment from DNPE that your completed Notice of Intent to Operate a School form has been received.

## Steps to Start a Home School

Starting a homeschool in North Carolina involves several steps to ensure compliance with state regulations. Here's a general guide:

1. **Understand State Laws:** Familiarize yourself with North Carolina homeschooling laws. In North Carolina, homeschooling is governed by state law and requires certain legal steps to establish and maintain a homeschool. You can find detailed information on your

state's Department of Education website or through homeschooling advocacy groups such as [Home School Legal Defense Association \(HSLDA\)](#).

- Review [Home School Requirements & Recommendations](#)
  - Review the [Nationally Standardized Testing Requirement](#)
  - Review the [Home School Guidebook](#).
  - Review the [Home School Frequently Asked Questions](#)
  - Review this [File an Intent to Operate a Home School webpage](#)
  - Review this [Notice of Intent to Establish a Home School](#)
2. **File a Notice of Intent (NOI):** According to North Carolina law, parents must file a [Notice of Intent \(NOI\)](#) to homeschool with the Department of Non-Public Education (DNPE) each school year. This notice includes basic information about the homeschool and the names and addresses of the homeschool's chief administrator and teacher. The NOI must be filed annually by August 15th or within 30 days of establishing the homeschool.
  3. **Select a Homeschool Name:** Choose a name for your homeschool. This name will be included in the Notice of Intent.
  4. **Choose a Homeschooling Method:** North Carolina law doesn't dictate specific teaching methods or curricula. Parents have the freedom to choose educational materials and methods that suit their child's needs and learning style.
  5. **Maintain Records:** Keep records of attendance, immunization records (unless exempt), and any standardized test scores. North Carolina law requires homeschools to maintain these records and make them available for inspection by the DNPE. Maintain a current daily log, journal or lesson plan book throughout the entire school year detailing time period for each subject each day and information covered during the specified time period. Retain records at your school until the student has enrolled in a conventional school or has graduated. (It is a good idea to keep this information indefinitely.)
  6. **Consider Joining a Homeschooling Association:** Joining a homeschooling association or co-op can provide support, resources, and opportunities for socialization for both you and your child.
  7. **Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date with any changes in homeschooling laws or requirements in North Carolina. The DNPE website is a valuable resource for updates and information.
  8. **Curriculum Planning:** Plan your curriculum based on your child's educational needs, interests, and learning style. There are many resources available, including textbooks, online courses, and educational materials designed specifically for homeschooling. Offer

instruction of at least similar quality, scope and duration as local conventional schools. Maintain at least five clock hours of instruction with the student(s) each school day.

9. **Stay Connected:** Connect with other homeschooling families in your area for support, advice, and socialization opportunities for your child.
  
10. **Annual Testing:** North Carolina homeschooling law requires students to take a nationally standardized achievement test every year, beginning in third grade. The test results do not need to be submitted to the state but must be kept on file by the homeschool for one year.

By following these steps and staying informed about North Carolina homeschooling laws and requirements, you can establish and operate a homeschool that meets both legal standards and your child's educational needs.

## Home School Statutes

*The Education Freedom Foundation has relied on the [U.S. Department of Education's State Regulation of Private and Home Schools Map](#) for relevant statutes. Over time, the state pages on this map have been updated since their initial creation. In some cases, states have changed their laws without these updates being reflected on the map. Given the various methods each state uses to publicize changes to its laws, the most recent information for the Start-A-School project was often obtained directly from the U.S. Department of Education website. Users are encouraged to verify any information before making decisions based on it.*

- "A 'home school' means a nonpublic school in which one or more children of not more than two families or households receive academic instruction from parents or legal guardians, or a member of either household." [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-563](#).

## Assessment and Diplomas

- Any new school may, on a voluntary basis, participate in any state-operated or -sponsored program that would otherwise be available to such school, including but not limited to the high school competency testing and statewide testing programs. However, since the standardized tests used by the Public Schools of North Carolina are state standardized (rather than nationally standardized), they do not satisfy the annual nationally standardized testing requirement for homeschools. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §§115C-551; 559](#).
- Students attending a home school must be tested academically once each year through a nationally standardized test or other nationally standardized equivalent measurement. The test must measure achievement in English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics for students and verbal and quantitative areas for grade 11 students. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §§115C-174, 550, 558, 563\(a\), 564](#).

## Curriculum and Instruction

- The person providing instruction in the homeschool must hold at least a high school diploma or its equivalent. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-564](#).
- A home school must operate for a nine-calendar month school term. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §§115C-548, 556](#).
- Nonpublic school students have access to Learn and Earn On-Line courses by directly registering through the established higher education organization's course registration process.

## Health

- Home schools that comply with the requirements under [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-563](#) et seq. are not subject to any other educational provision except requirements respecting immunization. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-565](#).
- Home schools must maintain records to ensure that students are immunized. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §§115C-548; 556](#).

## Initial and Renewal Applications

- Any new home school must send a notice of intent to operate to a duly authorized representative of the state of North Carolina. This "duly authorized representative" is defined by law as the Director of the Division of Non-Public Education. Notice must be provided when the home school is terminated. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §§115C-552\(b\); 560\(b\), 563\(b\)](#).
- Home schools elect to operate as either a private church school or school of religious charter, or a qualified nonpublic school and must then meet the requirements for that type of school per [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C](#), [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-547](#) through [§115C-554](#) or [§115C-547](#) through [§115C-562](#).
- Building inspections are waived though if the school meets in a private residence. [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-564](#).

## Public School Access

- Enrollment in the N.C. Virtual Public Schools program is for North Carolina public school students. The authorizing legislation for the North Carolina Virtual Public School states: "NCVPS shall be available at no cost to all students in North Carolina who are enrolled in North Carolina's public schools, Department of Defense schools, and schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs." Homeschoolers will be subjected to a course fee for each course that student is registered. To review information related to requirements, costs, course offerings, and to register please visit the following website, <https://ncvps.org/home-private-schools/>. Review the [NC Virtual Non Public Infoessionion](#).

## Resources

### Contact Information--State and Federal Departments of Education

- North Carolina Department of Administration  
Division of Non-Public Education  
1309 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1309  
Website: <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education>  
Phone: (984) 236-0110  
Email: [DNPE.General.Inquiries@doa.nc.gov](mailto:DNPE.General.Inquiries@doa.nc.gov)
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
301 North Wilmington Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
Phone: (919) 807-3300  
Fax: (919) 807-3445  
Email: [information@dpi.state.nc.us](mailto:information@dpi.state.nc.us)
- U.S. Department of Education, [North Carolina](#)

### North Carolina Home Educators (NCHE)

Supports North Carolina homeschoolers with events, legal guidance, and resources.

### Information and Legislation

- [North Carolina Department of Administration, Division of Non-Public Education \(DNPE\)](#)
- [North Carolina DNPE: Home School Information](#)
- [North Carolina Home School Guidebook](#)
- [North Carolina Virtual Public School \(NCVPS\): Home/Private School](#)
- [North Carolina General Statutes](#)
- [Article 39: Nonpublic Schools](#)
- [Other NC Statutes of Interest to Nonpublic Schools](#)