



Start a School

AN EDUCATION FREEDOM FOUNDATION INITIATIVE

Iowa

Home School

Families may choose to educate their children at home instead of sending them to a traditional public or nonpublic school; this is called homeschooling or private instruction. Families choose to homeschool for a variety of reasons, which is why there are several private instruction options in Iowa:

- Competent Private Instruction (CPI) provided or supervised by a licensed practitioner (Option 1), which may include:
 - Enrollment in the resident district's home school assistance program (HSAP; if offered),
 - Instruction by an appropriately licensed teacher that is privately retained (i.e., at their own expense) by the family, or
 - Instruction provided by an appropriately licensed parent, guardian, or custodian.
- CPI supervised by a parent, guardian, or custodian (Option 2) without a current Iowa teaching license.
- Independent Private Instruction (IPI).

Note on Noncompliance with Private Instruction Laws: A parent, guardian, or custodian that does not comply with CPI or IPI laws is subject to truancy prosecution. The Iowa Supreme Court has upheld truancy convictions for both failing to file Form A at all (State v. Skeel, 486 N.W. 2d 43 (Iowa 1992)) and not filling it in fully or accurately (State v. Rivera, 497 N.W. 2d 878 (Iowa 1993)). However, it is important to note that options are now available that do not require the filing of Form A.

Steps to Start a Home School

Starting a homeschool in Iowa involves a few key steps. Here's a general guide to get you started:

1. **Review State Laws:** Understand the homeschooling laws in Iowa. In Iowa, homeschooling is considered a form of private education. Parents or legal guardians are required to provide competent private instruction in accordance with Iowa Code section 299.1. You can find more information on the Iowa Department of Education website or

through homeschooling organizations in the state. 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 [Private Instruction Handbook](#).

2. **Notify the School District:** Inform your local school district of your intent to homeschool. You'll need to file a Competent Private Instruction (CPI) form or a Competent Private Instruction Report (CPIR) annually with the local school district by September 1st. This form includes basic information about the student and the subjects to be taught.
3. **Develop a Curriculum:** Design a curriculum that meets the educational standards set forth by the state of Iowa. You have the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to your child's needs and interests. Consider using textbooks, online resources, educational programs, and field trips to enhance learning.
4. **Maintain Records:** Keep detailed records of your homeschooling activities, including attendance, academic progress, and any other relevant documentation. This may include samples of your child's work, standardized test scores (optional but recommended), and a portfolio of achievements.
5. **Join a Homeschooling Support Group:** Consider joining a local homeschooling support group or co-op. These groups can provide valuable resources, social opportunities for your child, and support for you as a homeschooling parent.
6. **Stay Informed:** Stay updated on homeschooling laws and regulations in Iowa. Attend homeschooling workshops, conferences, and seminars to stay informed about best practices and legal requirements.
7. **Evaluate Progress:** Regularly assess your child's progress and make adjustments to your homeschooling approach as needed. You may also consider participating in standardized testing or assessments to gauge academic achievement.

Remember that while homeschooling offers flexibility and autonomy, it also requires dedication, patience, and commitment. Don't hesitate to reach out to other homeschooling families or educational professionals for guidance and support along the way.

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.

Assessment and Diplomas

- For "competent private instruction" provided by a licensed practitioner, the child's progress must be monitored by that licensed teacher. If a parent or legal guardian is providing the "competent private instruction," then he or she may submit an annual report, including the lesson plans, a portfolio of the student's work, and assessment evaluations to the school district and Iowa Department of Education by June 30. This information will be reviewed yearly by a qualified, licensed Iowa practitioner approved by the local school district to determine whether the child is achieving adequate progress. [Iowa Code §299A.2-4\(7\)](#).
- When a parent or legal guardian provides private instruction to a child who is at least 7 years old without the assistance or supervision of a validly licensed Iowa practitioner, the child is subject to initial baseline testing and an annual evaluation. Standardized testing or portfolio assessment may be chosen. Dual-enrolled students may be tested as part of the public school testing program. Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.88. This assessment is required if the child will access any district programs. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.2\(4\)](#).
- If the results of the evaluations indicate that the student has failed to make adequate progress, the parent or legal guardian must enroll the child in an accredited public or nonpublic school at the beginning of the next school year and shall continue attendance at an accredited public or nonpublic school until adequate progress is achieved. [Iowa Code §299A.6](#).

Curriculum and Instruction

- The reporting of "competent private instruction", must include an outline of the courses of study, the subjects covered, lesson plans and time spent on each course of study. Iowa Admin. [Code r. 281-31.2\(1\)\(a\)\(5\)](#).
- For "independent private instruction", the course of study must include instruction in mathematics, reading and language arts, science, and social studies. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.1\(2\)](#).
- A student under competent private instruction who meets the eligibility requirements in this rule and those in subparagraph 22.2(2)“b”(3) may apply to take courses under this division through the public school district in which the student is dually enrolled, provided that the resident school district does not offer a comparable course, and shall be allowed to take such courses on the same basis as a regularly enrolled student of the district. [22.16\(2\)](#).

Home Education Programs

- Home instruction satisfies compulsory attendance requirements as "private instruction," which may either be competent private instruction or independent private instruction. [Iowa Code §299A.1\(1\)](#).

- "Competent private instruction" consists of 148 instructional days a year, in which 37 instructional days occur each quarter, by or under the supervision of a licensed practitioner. [Iowa Code §299A.1\(2\)\(a\)](#).
- "Independent private instruction" means unaccredited instruction that : (1) does not enroll more than four unrelated students, (2) does not charge tuition, fees, or other remuneration for instruction, and (3) is not a nonpublic school. It is exempt from all state statutes and administrative rules applicable to a school, a school board, or a school district, except as otherwise provided in Iowa Code §299 and Iowa Code §299A. [Iowa Code §299A.1\(2\)\(b\)](#).

Initial and Renewal Applications

- A parent or legal guardian providing "competent private instruction" may file a report with the resident district by Sept. 1 or within 14 days of beginning home schooling if begun mid-school year. The report must include the name and address of the parent or guardian; name and birth date of the child; number of days of instruction (minimum of 148); name and address of the person providing the instruction and an indication of whether or not the instructor holds a valid Iowa practitioner license or teaching certificate appropriate to the age and grade level of the child; an outline of the courses of study; the texts to be used; evidence of immunization; an indication of whether dual enrollment is being sought; whether or not the child is currently identified as a child needing special education; and an indication of which form of annual assessment is being administered. Iowa Admin. Code r..281–31.2((1). This report must be filed if the parent or legal guardian wants to take advantage of school district programs (dual enrollment, homeschool assistance programs, etc.). [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.2\(4\)](#).
- There is no application requirement for "independent private instruction". A person providing independent private instruction must provide the following information if asked by the local superintendent or the director of the Iowa Department of Education: (1) a report identifying the primary instructor, (2) name and location of the authority responsible for the independent private instruction, and (3) the names of the students enrolled. [Iowa Code § 299A.1\(2\)\(b\)\(6\)](#).

Public School Access

- A parent or legal guardian desiring dual enrollment must notify the district of residence not later than Sept. 15 of the school year for which it is sought. A child under dual enrollment may participate in academic or instructional programs or any extracurricular activities in the district on the same basis as any regularly enrolled student. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.66](#).
- A district may provide available instructional materials to students receiving "competent private instruction" on the same basis as provided to regularly enrolled students when a student is participating in dual enrollment or a homeschool assistance program. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.5\(4\)](#).
- A public school district must make any approved driver education course available to students receiving private instruction on an equal basis of enrolled students. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.5\(6\)](#) and [r. 281-31.11\(a\)\(1\)](#).

- The public school district must make concurrent enrollment in community college programs available to students receiving "independent private education". [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.11\(2\)\(a\)](#).

Special Education

- When a child has been identified as requiring special education, the child is eligible to receive "competent private instruction" with the written approval of the director of special education of the area education agency of the child's district of residence. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.1010](#).
- A child receiving "independent private instruction" has waived special education services. [Iowa Admin. Code r. 281-31.10](#).

Resources

Information and Legislation

- [Iowa Legislature: Iowa Code](#)
- [Iowa Legislature: Iowa Administrative Code](#)
- [Iowa Department of Education: Iowa Core Curriculum](#)
- [List of Nonpublic Schools](#)
- [Application for Initial Recognition](#)
- [State Accreditation](#)
- [Independent Accreditation](#)
- [Approved Independent Accrediting Agencies](#)
- [Homeschool Technical Assistance Based on 2024 Legislation and Rule Changes](#)

School District Forms

- [Annual Evaluation Notification Form](#) - Provides the text a district must use to fulfill its obligation to notify parents, guardians, and custodians of a CPI student under Option 2 with dual enrollment or optional reporting of their annual evaluation options.
- [FERPA Annual Notification Form: Independent Private Instruction](#) - Provides the text a district must use to fulfill its annual obligation to notify parents, guardians, and

custodians of IPI students of their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- [FERPA Annual Notification Form: Competent Private Instruction](#) - Provides the text a district must use to fulfill its annual obligation to notify parents, guardians, and custodians of CPI students of their FERPA rights. This form should accompany Form A at the time it is provided to a parent, guardian, or custodian.
- [Form C-1 Instructions and Form: Progress Form for Student of Compulsory Attendance Age Under CPI Option #2 with Dual Enrollment](#) (Due by Aug. 1) - Provides a form that the district must complete if a student receiving CPI under Option 2 with dual enrollment failed to make adequate annual progress and is of compulsory attendance age.