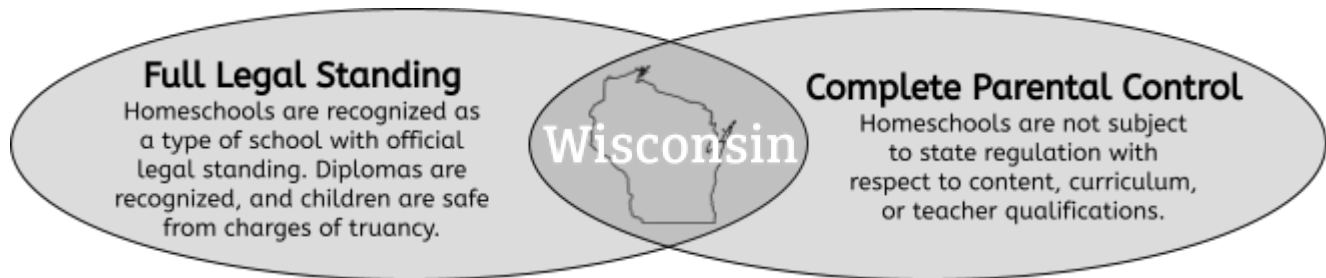


What's So Unusual (and Great!) About Wisconsin's Homeschooling Law?



Rights and Regulations: How Wisconsin Compares To Other States

Most states allow *either* full legal standing *or* complete parental control.
Some states allow *neither*.

Wisconsin is a special case in that it offers *both*.

Wisconsin's homeschool law (1983 WI Act 512) is unusual. In Wisconsin, parents are the homeschool administrators, and as such, have 100% control over the content, method, schedule, and evaluation of our students (our children).

Because we have a law stating that homeschools are a type of private school, we also have full legal standing and protection as homeschoolers. We can grant a legally-recognized diploma and issue a valid transcript. We are not obligated to provide any information other than what is stated in the law. And we, as parents, are the only administrators of our homeschools – with all that that entails.

As the diagram above illustrates, homeschooling parents in Wisconsin have a special combination of parental control and legal status. This visual makes it easy to talk to others about what we have in Wisconsin and why we want to keep it that way.

How does it work in other states?

The thirteen other states that require only notification, (but not testing, professional evaluation, or home visits by state officials), have components of notification that go above and beyond what the Wisconsin law requires. "Notification" in these states includes everything from submitting a birth certificate (Nebraska), to submitting curriculum to a local board of trustees annually (Wyoming), to requiring proof of a "competent" instructor (Kansas and New Mexico).

In Wisconsin we sign an annual affidavit (via the PI-1206 Homeschool Report) stating that that we will provide a minimum of 875 hours of instruction and that our program will include a sequentially progressive curriculum of fundamental instruction in reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and health.

What about the 11 states that do not require any notification of homeschooling?

In Illinois, homeschoolers are not required to notify the state that they are homeschooling. However, they are required to prove, if asked, that they are providing "the branches of education taught to children of corresponding age and grade in the public schools." (Illinois school code Section 26.1) If parents choose not to notify the state and are charged with truancy, it is up to each individual family to provide proof that their children are not truant. While it might seem that freedom from a notification requirement is the

best situation for homeschoolers because it provides the ultimate degree of parental freedom, yearly notification provides a protective “paper trail” of legal compliance.

What about states with substantial regulations but no legal status?

Consider the following example: In Massachusetts there is no law that specifically addresses homeschooling. There are three court cases that are used as precedent and guidance for homeschooling decisions. These decisions contend that parents may educate their own children, but that the local school district (as represented by the school board or an administrator) is the final authority on whether the educational plan is adequate. Each school board can impose their own regulations in their area. Consequently, parents in Massachusetts cannot issue a high school diploma. Homeschoolers in Massachusetts must either use an umbrella school or take the GED or High School Equivalency Assessment. (www.ahem.info/HighSchoolDiplomas.html) Homeschoolers in Massachusetts must comply with the regulations of their school district, which may change depending on who is on the school board or as district personnel change.

There are also states (such as New York) that require a yearly letter of intent, response from the school district, individualized home instruction plan, quarterly reports, year-end evaluation and standardized testing – and STILL these homeschooling parents cannot grant a high school diploma. In New York that can only happen by asking a local public school superintendent to issue a “letter of educational equivalency.” The criteria for receiving such a letter are almost impossible to achieve. (www.homeschoolnyc.com/resources/college.html#diploma)

In both cases, parents are effectively required to ask for permission to educate their children – a situation that is typical of states that heavily regulate homeschooling.

Why is our law in Wisconsin so great?

- **We have proof** (the PI-1206 Homeschool Report) each year that we are in compliance with the state requirements for homeschooling without having to ask permission or share the personal information of our children with the state.
- **We have 100% control** over the content, method, and evaluation of our plan of study within the broadly defined subject areas detailed in the homeschooling law.
- If we are ever questioned about truancy **we have paperwork** that shows our children are enrolled in our homeschool.
- **Our homeschool diplomas are accepted** by employers, institutes of higher education, and the military because we have this legal standing and because we can produce a PI-1206 Homeschool Report for each year that we were homeschooling.

It really doesn't get better than this. Read more about how we got this amazing law at: www.homeschooling-wpa.org/about-us/history/

Our homeschooling forebearers, the founders and past members of Wisconsin Homeschooling Parents Association (then WPA), left us with a truly special set of circumstances—the incredible combination of legal status and parental freedom that is the Wisconsin homeschooling law. In order to take advantage of all it has to offer, it is critically important that you understand what your legal obligations are and that you abide by them. Most importantly, file your PI-1206 Homeschool Report correctly (without which you don't have legal status) and conduct your homeschooling activities in such a way that it does not create precedent or expectation that we as homeschoolers are willing to cede any of our freedoms. Helping you understand how to do this is one of the main reasons WHPA exists. Please use the website to educate yourself on how to exercise your very special homeschooling freedom in a responsible way. As WHPA members, we each represent a unified body of homeschoolers working to protect the freedoms of all homeschoolers in Wisconsin. When we speak with one voice we are heard.