

Homebound Instruction: Questions & Answers for Families

Revised January 2013

The Department of Public Instruction receives many inquiries from parents, guardians, schools, and others regarding homebound instruction. This document will help to clarify what parents/guardians can expect when requesting homebound instruction for their child.

1. My child can't attend school at this time due to an illness/injury/surgery. Is my school district required to provide homebound instruction?

No. There is no law that specifically requires a school district to provide homebound instruction to a student who is unable to attend school. However, different requirements apply to special education students, i.e., students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs). In some situations, federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may impact a school district's obligation to provide homebound instruction. This document does not address these standards but does provide sources for additional information. See Question #3 for more information.

2. If my child's physician writes a prescription for homebound instruction, isn't the school required to provide it?

No. The school board is required to **consider** the request, but may or may not choose to provide the instruction.

3. How do I request homebound instruction?

The actual procedure for requesting homebound instruction is determined by each local school board, not at the state level. Start by discussing your concern with the school principal. Some boards require that requests be put in writing. Some school districts may have a written policy on homebound instruction. If so, you are entitled to receive a copy, if you request it.

If your child currently has an IEP, you should request the IEP Team reconvene for your child as part of your request for homebound instruction. You can find more information on this at www.specialed.us/pl-07/pl07-iepro.html.

If you believe that your child may qualify as having a disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, you should make that clear in your request. More information about ADA is available at www.ada.gov/. More information about Section 504 is available at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html.

School boards have 90 days to render a written decision to your written request for homebound instruction. If your child has been evaluated for special education but was not found to be eligible for special education, then the school board must provide a written decision to your request within 30 days.

4. My child isn't in special education now, but I wonder if this illness could change that?

If you feel your child's condition may be a disability requiring special education, you can request that your child be evaluated by an IEP (Individual Education Plan) team and considered for special education services. Please keep in mind that regardless of the outcome of this process, this is not a guarantee that homebound instruction will be provided. You will be highly involved in this process and are a member of the IEP team.

5. My daughter is pregnant. May I request homebound instruction for her?

School age parents are eligible for services that allow them to continue and complete their education. This may include homebound instruction on a temporary basis. Be sure to tell the school that your child is or will be a school-age parent. More information is available at http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_schlageparent.

6. My child is having mental health issues. May I request homebound instruction for this type of illness?

Yes. Mental illnesses or concerns can be a legitimate reason to request homebound instruction.

7. If the district does provide homebound instruction, how much do they need to provide?

Because homebound instruction is not required, there are no standards as to the amount of instruction, the time of day it is delivered, or the classes offered. Even in the best of circumstances, homebound instruction cannot completely replace the experiences your child would get by attending school. A licensed teacher must teach homebound instruction, when it is provided.

8. Isn't this standard different for high school students, due to graduation requirements?

No. Because schools are not required to provide homebound instruction, they can determine appropriate amounts of instruction on an individual basis, if it is provided.

9. If I request homebound instruction and it is denied, will I get in trouble for not sending my child to school?

A child who is excused because they are "temporarily not in proper physical or mental condition to attend a school program, but who can be expected to return to a school program upon termination or abatement of the illness or condition" cannot be found truant or habitually truant. However, the school can request a written statement from your child's physician, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist, psychologist, or Christian Science practitioner as proof of the condition of your child. This excuse must state the time period for which it is valid and cannot be valid for longer than 30 days. If your child needs to miss school longer than 30 days, the school could ask for another written excuse.

10. If the district denies my request for homebound instruction, may I request other changes in my child's schedule, such as a shortened schedule?

Yes. Parents have the right to request modifications in their child's educational program. As with homebound instruction, the district may or may not choose to modify your child's program. It is best to meet with school staff to discuss what is best for your child.

11. Is homebound instruction the same as home schooling?

No. In a home-based Private Education Program, or “home schooling,” parents are responsible for their child’s education. They must register their home-schooled child with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to avoid their child being considered truant.

12. Can I home-school my child if the district denies my request for homebound instruction?

Parents always have the right to home-school their child. If you choose to home-school your child, state law requires you register him/her. Call 1 (888) 245-2732 to request a form or go to http://sms.dpi.wi.gov/sms_homeb for more information.

13. My child attends private school. May I request homebound instruction from my local public school district?

You can request it, but the public school is not obligated to provide it, just as they are not obligated to provide it for students attending the public school.

For further information or questions, contact Gregg Curtis, Consultant, School Consulting Programs, at (608) 266-2820 or gregg.curtis@dpi.wi.gov. This document is also available for downloading at <http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/files/sspw/pdf/homeboundqafamilies.pdf>.

This document is meant to provide general guidance to families regarding homebound instruction. It is not meant to substitute for legal advice. Please consult an attorney for assistance in individual cases.

The references used in preparing this document are Wis. Stat. sec. 118.15, Compulsory Attendance and Subchapter VI of Chapter 115, Education for School Age Parents.

More information about compulsory school attendance can be found at http://sspw.dpi.wi.gov/sspw_compulsoryattendance.