

Yes, You Can Homeschool

Who could have predicted the impact of the coronavirus on education? Any preconceived ideas you had about homeschooling are now gone. Ready or not, you are now living it. Many parents are realizing the freedom in customizing a curriculum to uniquely cater to their child's needs. What a perfect opportunity to explore the plethora of options available through the internet!

Parent-led education can come by many different names. For simplicity's sake, we will use the term “homeschooling”. There are so many excellent resources and programs that do most of the teaching for you, so you don't have to know it all. There are two homeschool associations in California that will get you started: CheaofCA.org and CaliforniaHomeschool.net. Homeschool World (home-school.com) is another link that will simplify the process for you.

For those of you who would like to continue homeschooling once the quarantine is lifted, keep reading. It is important to understand the legally accepted models of education from which to choose from in California. Under the California Education Code 48200, all children between the ages of 6 to 18 must attend a public, full-time day school unless they are exempted. The most common alternatives are as follows:

Option 1- Parents can legally establish private schools in their own homes. They just have to file a private school affidavit with the California Department of Education.

Option 2- A Private School Program (PSP) is similar to other private schools when it comes to meeting the legal requirements. The difference between the two is that a PSP can be

composed entirely of homeschoolers, or may be an extension program of a campus-based private school.

Option 3- Use a tutor. A credentialed California Teacher can be used as a tutor. Tutoring must be done for at least three hours a day for 175 days per year.

Option 4- Enroll in a charter school or public school Independent Study Program (ISP). This can allow your student to study at home, paid for with tax dollars.

The above options can be broken into two financial categories. The first is funded by the parent, who pays out of pocket using their after-tax dollars. Options 1 through 3 fit this category. This provides the parent full autonomy over the curriculum. The second financial category is using state tax dollars to pay for Independent Study Programs. The difference between charter school ISPs and public school ISPs is that the charter ISPs operate independently from state schools. To learn more about publically funded K-12 schools, go to cde.ca.gov/sp/ps/homeschool.asp.

Let's dive a little deeper into Charter School Independent Study Programs. Some will give parents money to be used for curriculum, extracurricular activities, tutoring, etc. An educational specialist (teacher) is also provided to coach you through the academic year. Here are examples of such charter schools: iLeadExploration.org, ExcelAcademy.Education, SkyMountainCS.org. To learn more go to cde.ca.gov/sp/ps/homeschool.asp.

How does a parent navigate the legalities once the decision to continue homeschooling is made? Fortunately, there are organizations founded by other like minded-people. Here they are:

1. Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA.org)- They will defend your right to homeschool. Their offerings also include school consultants, special needs help, support groups, and so much more.
2. Family Protection Ministries (FPMCA.org)- Their purpose is in “Defending the freedom of parents to train, educate, and care for their children privately, without government interference.”
3. Pacific Justice Institute (PacificJustice.org)- They are a non-profit legal defense organization whose mission is to defend, without charge, the religious freedoms, parental rights, and other civil liberties of people who cannot defend themselves.

A great way to learn homeschooling from experts is to attend a convention. Homeschool conventions offer a full range of specialized workshops and exhibit halls with books, teaching aids, etc. that are designed to train and equip home educating parents. Here are some which were canceled for this year, due to coronavirus.

1. Christian Home Educators Association of California (CheaofCA.org)
2. California Homeschool Network (CaliforniaHomeschool.net)

Many parents are saying yes to homeschooling, and there are so many creative ways in which this is happening. People in all different types of situations are doing it, from the two-parent working homes, to stay-at-home moms, and even single parents. It is as individual as the families who pursue it. The movement is exploding with resources and opportunities to support you.