

What's the Effect of the New Compulsory School Age?

On June 28, 2019, Governor Tom Wolf signed House Bill 1615 into law which expands the compulsory school age from 8-17 to 6-18. It will be effective beginning with the 2020-2021 school year.

6- and 7-year olds

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, homeschooling parents of 6- and 7-year-olds will be required to comply with the homeschool reporting requirements. This will include filing a homeschool affidavit, providing the required days/hours of instruction, maintaining a portfolio of records, and obtaining a qualified evaluator's certification that an appropriate education is occurring by June 30.

Graduates in 2021 and beyond

The graduation exclusion was not changed. The definition of compulsory school age still specifically excludes "a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school" (note that neither home education nor private tutor programs are listed.)

The good news is Pennsylvania's homeschool statute extends legal recognition and protection to homeschool diplomas awarded by (1) a homeschool supervisor/parent on a form provided by the PA Dept of Education and (2) an approved homeschool diploma-granting organization. Thus, graduates who received these diplomas will have no problem graduating before age 18.

Graduates from a private tutor program and those whose parents do not use the PDE diploma form do not, however, have a clear exemption from the compulsory school attendance requirements. It remains to be seen whether these graduates will face difficulty.

Excerpted from a letter to HSLDA members and friends from Dan Beasley, HSLDA Attorney

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