

How to Get Started Homeschooling a Child With Special Needs in NY State

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Below is a list of things that you should do before you begin homeschooling a child with special learning needs in New York State:

- 1) Make sure the decision to homeschool is a family decision and that Mom and Dad are committed to supporting one another through the good and bad times. It also helps to have the support of other family members.
- 2) Join Homeschool Legal Defense Association (www.hsllda.org). Check out their struggling learner webpage.
- 3) Go to the NYS LEAH (New York State Loving Education at Home) website www.leah.org and click on "getting started" and review Regulation 100.10 and the Frequently Asked Questions. Make special note of the timeline that you must follow for submitting your Intent to Homeschool, IHIP (Individualized Home Instruction Plan), and quarterly reports. You should purchase a NYS LEAH Regulatory Manual. You can purchase this online through the LEAH website. The NYS LEAH Regulation Manual contains sample forms to help parents write their letter of intent, IHIP, and quarterly reports. Homeschool Legal Defense Association has Special Needs Coordinators who can further assist parents in writing up these documents.
- 4) Go to the Parents Instructing Challenged Children (PICC) LEAH website www.piccnys.com and click on the News and Alerts button and read about the new law governing homeschooled children with special needs. Next, click on the web link to the SED Guidance Document that tells you what you must do if you wish to receive special education services for your child. After you do that, check out the PICC LEAH Articles & Reviews and Resources web pages.
- 5) Read about PICC LEAH and consider joining. Members get access to a confidential membership directory so that they can find other homeschoolers in NYS with children with the same or similar diagnosis, a bi-monthly newsletter, and access to the PICC LEAH Lending Library that has over 250 books, DVD's, audio tapes, videos, curriculum, and small equipment therapy items cover a wide range of special needs topics. The library contains a large selection of speech/language manuals and a section specifically for Autism and PDD social and safety skills. PICC LEAH does not have monthly meetings as it has members spread across New York State. There is a downloadable membership application on the website.
- 6) Consider carefully if you want to have your child receive special education services through your school district or if you want to provide for your child's needs privately.
- 7) The New York State Regulations on Homeschooling 8 NYCRR § 100.10 (h) detail the requirements for annual assessments. If a parent homeschooling their child feels that their child may need testing accommodations in order to score above the 33rd percentile on a standardized achievement test, they are **NOT** required to go through their local school district to get them. Instead, they may choose to get their private service provider to recommend the appropriate accommodation(s). You should check with the specific test publisher of the achievement test you plan to use on what they require for an accommodation to be given. Generally, the private service provider should be a competent and appropriate professional person in the student's disability. The private service provider should also confirm the specific justification for administering the test under the requested conditions.

The written verification obtained privately is done through an evaluation. The evaluation may be a psychological or neuropsychological evaluation. The evaluation may also "label" your child with a diagnosis. The initial evaluation process required to determine if testing accommodations are needed can take a few weeks to complete, so do not wait until the a month before you need the testing accommodations to try and get them! If you choose to have the evaluation done through your school district, you will not have to pay for it. If you choose to have your child evaluated privately, you have to pay for that cost out of your own pocket. Some medical insurance plans may cover all or part of this cost.

Consider using the PASS (Personal Achievement Summary System) by Hewitt Resources. This test is an untimed test that allows you to test at your child's individual level (grades 1-8). If your child is at 1st grade in reading that is the level at which you test. This test allows you to test at multiple levels (for example - reading 1st grade, math 3rd grade, language arts 2nd).

8) If your child needs special education services and you choose to go through your local school district for services, please remember that under the new law governing homeschooled children with special needs in New York State, you must make all requests through your school district's board of education. The board of education will then refer your case to the CSE. Please see the PICC LEAH website (www.piccnys.com) News & Alerts section for more information and the web link to the VESID website. You can go directly to the VESID website and download special education publications regarding Eligibility and Evaluations for Students with Disabilities and other VESID publications that will detail your rights.

If your child continues to receive special education services through their school district beyond compulsory age (16yrs old), you are still required to file your Individualized Home Instruction Plan (IHIP) and quarterly.

8) When sending correspondence to your school district, it is recommended that it always be sent certified return receipt so that you have record that you mailed your required paperwork.

9) Check out the PICC LEAH Resource Webpage (www.piccnys.com) for a list of recommended Outside Educational Consultants, curriculum, and other homeschool helps.

10) Check out the National Challenged Homeschoolers Associated Network website www.nathhan.org for additional resources and information.

11) Know your rights and know the NY State Homeschool Regulation 100.10.