

On Monday, July 3, 2023, I had a meeting with the Agency of Education's Interim Secretary, Heather Bouchey which lasted 45 minutes. I know this is a long email but this was a good meeting and I covered the following issues.

Link to the new statute.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58ac41aa2e69cfa96ffa654a/t/648c917eec2a323819d52101/1686933886827/This+is+NOT+an+official+version+of+the+law.pdf>

1. **The use of the word “rules” in documentation sent out by the home study unit.** I asked that these changes not be called rules but statute requirements and Sec Bouchey agreed these are not rules but statute.
2. **Minimum Course of Study:** We discussed that the new statute does not require submission of the MCOS for any reason and I brought up the fact that the new statute also does not require that an MCOS be written to be kept on file at home. The only thing the statute requires concerning the MCOS is that there be 175 days of instruction in the minimum course of study. She agreed. Then we discussed why they still mentioned that one be may need to be written. This leads into point #3.
3. **Dual Enrollment and Early College programs:** Prior to the change in the law, the AOE was requiring that a family must submit an MCOS to enroll in these programs. I explained that this was not according to statute before the law change and now that the law has changed an MCOS is still not required for enrollment in these programs. I further mentioned that what is required for enrollment in these programs is a personal learning plan (PLP) and that the statute clearly defines what a PLP is and it is not an MCOS. **Section 16 V.S.A. § 942 (10)** of the Vermont Statutes defines what a PLP is. So why are they asking for an MCOS to enroll in these programs? Second, according to the definition of the PLP, it is the sole responsibility of the home study family to have one but does it really need to be submitted? Do the public-school kids have to submit them? The Secretary also said these programs are completely independent of home study. To which I said then the enrollment process for those programs have nothing to do with the enrollment process for home study. What I want is a clear division of the enrolling processes of these programs. She seemed to agree with that.

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/16/023/00942>

4. **End of year assessment and a verification letter:** Apparently, there are some colleges, the military, other educational entities that ask for an official document from the Agency of Education that a home study student did meet the requirements for home study. How many of these ask for this? Is this a rare request? The Secretary did acknowledge that this is tricky because they do not have any information to make such a statement. Yet, they are trying to accommodate families who ask for such a letter for college admissions or

scholarship programs. So, this is why they ask for that final EOYA so they can write the letter. Now I do not agree with this policy they have come up with, but I do see their dilemma. This needs more conversation and I need to do some research on just how common is this that educational entities are asking for such information. My final point to her was that they did not need and EOYA to write such a letter. And since families no longer have to submit the EOYA they just need to say that the student was enrolled in home study as required by law, since they can't say any more than that. Then families need to be educated that it is not the Agency of Education's responsibility to provide documentation that the law does not allow them to give.

5. **Enrollment Forms:** I wanted to make sure that Sec Bouchey understood that the new statute has two very different forms described in it. And that what I did not want was that the Agency simply simplifies this into one form whereby the family must attest every year. According to the statute the attestations are done once and then annually the family confirms that they are continuing in that enrollment. I explained that as long as a family submits this annual enrollment stating that they are continuing in home study they are protected from truancy for however long the home study program is in operation. A notice of receipt letter of the annual enrollment form can remind the family of the attestations they made but not ask them to attest every year. She seemed to agree and will work with staff on this.
6. **Form B:** The new statute does not require that every family submit such a document. That the new statute ONLY says if there is a documented disability and if so that such a "form" could even that supporting documentation of the diagnosed disability be submitted. Sec Bouchey said that they wanted to make sure families know they can seek help and that they might not understand their child had a disability. I said you have guidelines that go along with this process make sure that information is there. Be a supporting role. Explain how they can access the process to document a possible disability. Asking families to prove there is no disability is just not needed. I explained that rather than a special form a single line on the enrollment form is all that is necessary. Does the child have a documented disability? Yes or no. If Yes, then please submit the diagnosis. If no then nothing needs to be done. This is the reduction in requirements that the statute is clearly stating. She understood what I was saying but needs to work with staff.

Those are my notes on the conversation. Did I make a difference? We shall see. The Secretary and I plan to circle back around in a week or two to see where things are at. This role out will be bumpy so hang on!