

## FAQs for Superintendent Office Home Instruction Points of Contact

Q: What is new for 2024-2025 NEO home instruction functionality?

- SAUs can now edit multiple years of data: previous year, current year, and future year (after April). Data protocol does not allow adding/editing records older than previous year.
- SAUs can now mark on the electronic form when they have checked assessment information.
- Listing screen changes:
  - Display First/Subsequent Year status, physical street address, assessment check, start date and status date.
- Relocation function

Q: What is a home instruction student?

- In home instruction, the parent submits a Notice of Intent to Provide Home Instruction and takes full responsibility for the child and any required resources while the child is provided home instruction. They legally direct the child's education by choosing the curriculum, facilitating the process and determining academic needs, even if they engage other persons or programs to provide instruction or complete the required annual assessment. A home instruction student may be eligible to participate in public school (see 20-A M.R.S. §5021) and in Early College opportunities in Maine.

Q: What is the Maine DOE's role in home instruction?

- A: The Maine DOE is a “co-receiver” of the required home instruction documentation and has set up a statewide electronic portal. The State aggregates statewide data on the number of home instruction students and may provide general information about home instruction requirements to the public, to other agencies, and to SAUs. The Maine DOE does not “approve” or review documentation and does not provide guidance regarding curriculum or assessment sources or home instruction resources. [MEDMS.Support@maine.gov](mailto:MEDMS.Support@maine.gov) may provide the SAU with technical assistance with the portal.

Q: What is the Home Instruction Point of Contact?

- The superintendent designates a Home Instruction Point of Contact within the SAU/superintendent's office, which is a required NEO role, to do the following:
  - access the unit's home instruction portal forms and lists
  - follow up with and submit information required by home instruction families.

Q: Does the SAU Home Instruction Point of Contact need to notify Maine DOE regarding any Home Instruction documentation?

- No. If NEO technical assistance is required, please contact [MEDMS.Support@maine.gov](mailto:MEDMS.Support@maine.gov).

Q: For which years is a record enterable/editable by the SAU? What if a Notice is submitted for a past year outside of the editable/enterable window, with the expectation that it is recorded?

- Editing/Entering is available for the current school year (a school year is July 1-June 30), the immediate past school year, and the future year during the months of April, May and June. Outside of that window, data protocol does not allow corrections or entry of new forms from past or future school years.

Q: How does an authorized school unit staff member gain access to the NEO home instruction module?

- The Superintendent may authorize access via the [NEO Access Request Form](#).

Q: Can authorized school unit staff edit or see individual records for those outside the authorizing unit?

- No. Furthermore, the authorization is by school administrative unit (SAU), and not by AOS or any other unit, so staff in SAUs within the same AOS cannot edit the other records without specific authorization for the multiple SAUs.

Q: What is the difference between home instruction and an equivalent instruction school?

- In home instruction, the parent submits a Notice of Intent to Provide Home Instruction and takes full responsibility for the child while the child is being provided home instruction—they legally direct the child's education by choosing the curriculum, facilitating the process and determining academic needs, even if they

engage other persons or programs to provide instruction or complete the required annual assessment. A home instruction high school student may be eligible to participate in [Early College Opportunities in Maine](#). In an equivalent instruction school, the school provides the teachers, curriculum, assessment, safety measures, attendance and other structural processes that ensure that a student is being afforded equivalent instruction within the meaning of [20-A M.R.S. §5021-A](#). The school, rather than the parent, is required to notify a superintendent about any resident student that attends the private school, as outlined in 20-A M.R.S. §5001-A(3)(A)(2): “A student is credited with attendance at a private school only if a certificate showing the name, residence and attendance of the person at the school, signed by the person or persons in charge of the school, has been filed with the school officials of the administrative unit in which the student resides.” A high school student in an equivalent instruction school is not eligible to participate in Early College opportunities in Maine and is not ordinarily eligible to participate in public school academic courses; however, the student may be eligible for cocurricular/extracurricular activities at the public school as outlined in [20-A M.R.S. §5021-A](#). A list of recognized equivalent instruction schools can be found at <https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/schoolops/equivalentinstruction> .

Q: Does a home instruction student need to qualify for or be approved for home instruction?

- No. The parent/guardian, however, must submit the required documentation in order to comply with Maine attendance law (M.R.S. 20-A §5001-A(3)(A)(4)).

Q: What is a “First-Year” home instruction student? May a student be assigned as “First-Year” more than once?

- First-Year means the student is filing as a home instruction student for the first time in the State of Maine. However, if they file prior to age six, they may file as a home instruction student again until the school year in which they turn six, after which they must file as a subsequent year student and provide a prior year assessment. This means that an assessment must be administered during the school year in which they turn six. Also if a student re-enters home instruction and they did not finish the previous year in home instruction, they may file as a first time home instruction student.

Q: What is the annual assessment requirement?

- All the particulars of when and how to submit the assessment requirements for a subsequent year home instruction student (including for those discontinuing home instruction) are in this guidance: <https://mainedoeneews.net/2024/04/12/a-reminder-to-maine-home-instruction-parents-and-saus-regarding-annual-assessment-requirement-2/>. An assessment is due if the student finishes the school year in home instruction.

Q: When and how may a home instruction student participate in school instruction or activities or use the resources in schools?

- Please see [20-A §5021. Standards for participation in public schools by students enrolled in equivalent instruction programs](#)

Q: What happens if the home instruction family does not submit the required documentation?

- The SAU's responsibility is to provide best effort to locate and roster students in one of the types of enrollment (public, private, home instruction). Best effort is locally determined.

Q. Are assessments uploaded to NEO or just retained in the paper records?

- The portal is currently how all home instruction information, requirements and materials are submitted, accessed and shared, and the expectation is that all material is uploaded to the portal. This information is visible and downloadable as part of the listing screen and listing functionality, for use by the SAU.

Q: May the Home Instruction Point of Contact enter a Notice of Intent on behalf of the parent using the parent portal (from the public site)?

- No. A parent must personally "sign" by checking the affirmations in the parent/guardian portal. Conversely, when logged in as a staff member of an SAU, the staff member must always attach the signed Notice and/or evidence that a submission or edit has been authorized by the guardian.

Q: What happens when a family notifies the superintendent's office of a home instruction update, like a student's re-entry to school, move out of state, corrected information, or graduation?

- Be sure to communicate the information to the data manager of the SAU's school information system so that the student can be exited or re-entered, or the SIS record corrected accordingly. If it happens when the school year is over (in the summer) then an assessment is due. Once the Home Instruction Point of Contact receives the communication, with assessment if required, the contact should submit the information to the portal as follows:
  1. Log into the home instruction portal with your staff login information.
  2. Select "[View Home Instruction Students Listing](#)".
  3. Select the correct school year.
  4. Search for the student's name in the search box (use part of the name if the spelling is in question; also consider possible alternate names).
  5. Select "edit," then correct any information required, scroll down to the student's information and enter a note in the note box describing the change.
  6. If the exit from home instruction occurs during the school year [ONLY] change the status from "Home Instruction Notice Submitted" to "Stop Home Instruction."
  7. Enter the date of change in the date field.
  8. Attach the final assessment (if the student completed the school year in home instruction) to the parent section at the top or to the student record at the bottom.
  9. Submit.

Q: What happens when a family notifies the superintendent's office of a home instruction student's move to another Maine School Administrative Unit?

- The superintendent's office where the student lived prior to moving would update the record with the final assessment if provided. Then, using the **Relocate** function from the listing screen (next to Create New) completes the relocation process for the student.

Q: How does the SAU Point of Contact prepare for the upcoming school year?

- Review home instruction lists toward the end of the current school year.
- Send reminders of deadlines and requirements for the upcoming school year to subsequent year families.
- Keep notes of late submissions and follow up on missing items.
- Plan to attend any pertinent trainings/office hours offered by Maine DOE.

Q: When should a parent consider home instruction?

- Home instruction is an equivalent instruction alternative to public school pursuant to M.R.S. 20-A §5001-A(3)(A)(4). It is not intended for and should not be recommended as a temporary enrollment option for families traveling out of the State for extended periods of time or experiencing difficulties with school attendance..

Q: What happens if the school unit is asked for home instruction information by a military recruiter?

- Please see <https://mailchi.mp/maine/cu5lemq6y0-1325735?e=%5bUNIQID>

Q: If a student re-enters school from home instruction, how is placement decided?

- Please see [§5022. Admission to regular program.](#)

Q: How does the school unit determine grade level?

- Grade data is not part of the required information that is collected per Maine statute, and there is nothing in law that stipulates that the parent get “permission” to promote a child to the next grade, or modify the level of instruction. If an SAU requires a grade level determination prior to re-entry placement or public school participation, the school unit needs to determine an appropriate method for determining grade level.

Q: What is the recommended process for verifying home instruction records?

- Because of privacy concerns, when asked by a parent or former student to verify home instruction, the SAU Point of Contact should not provide information until the requester has supplied: student name, parent name on form, address on form, which school years to verify, and permission to release the information. Use caution if there is doubt about the parent’s legitimate connection to the student.
- Verification does NOT include validating a claim of graduation, regardless of who issues transcript/diploma – unless the SAU has agreed to do an official analysis for such purpose. Verification letter provided [only] that indicates that the

parents/guardians submitted the correct requirements, since home instruction does not include validation of graduation or diploma/transcripts. If they did not provide the Notice and Assessment for each year that the student completed the school year in home instruction, then it's not possible to verify that the parent followed the law. Suggested verification letter template [here](#).

Q: What is the recommended process for retaining home instruction records and lists?

- The portal record is **not** the official record copy for the school administrative unit. Please be sure to check the SAU's local retention schedule to determine what you need to keep, in what format (printing out and storing; electronic copy, etc.) and for how long.

Q: What guidance can the SAU give to families experiencing technical issues with NEO portal submission?

- If you experience issues with the [Online submission: Home Instruction Portal](#), please know that parents using a phone, a non-Windows laptop, and/or a non-Chrome browser will experience issues. If you can use a Chrome browser on a standard Windows laptop, and clear your browser cookies before entry, the submission should go more smoothly. Also, if you are attaching a file, you must ensure that it is a pdf, word, or jpeg file and that the name of the file is simple, without special characters. If successful, you will receive a confirmation email if you have provided your email address on the form. If further attempts are unsuccessful, you may complete the paper form - Notice of Intent to Provide Home Instruction - found [on this page](#) and mail/deliver it to the superintendent's office where you reside (only). Note: Please do not send electronic or paper forms to the State (Maine Department of Education).

Q: May an unaccompanied youth submit their own Home Instruction Notice of Intent?

- No, not until/unless they are 18 years old or legally emancipated.

Q: Are home instruction families able to receive special education services?

- Please review the information here: [Special Education & Home Instruction](#). Home instruction students are eligible to receive special education services at their resident school unit's public school. The public school has an obligation to provide

such services only in the event that the student elects to participate in classes at the school, and only to the extent that those services are necessary, due to the student's disability, to enable the student to participate in those classes. On the Special Education Laws & Regulations page, click "State Regulation: Chapter 101" to download the document. See Section IV.4.H.

Q: Are families who leave Maine for an extended period of time eligible for home instruction?

- Normal guidance is that the student is not eligible for education in Maine if they are not residing in Maine. At this time there is no guidance about length of absence, and this would be a local consideration. An assessment is due if the student finished the year in home instruction.

Q: How do I prevent a home instruction family from re-enrolling if they do not submit the required assessment?

- When a Notice is submitted, the Home Instruction Point of Contact checks to confirm whether the status (First Year/Subsequent Year) is correct and that any required assessment is included. If the requirements are not met, then follow-up with the guardian is needed.