



Education Law Center

How to Enroll Yourself as an Older Youth in School

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IMPORTANT: ELC's publications are intended to give you a general idea of the law. However, each situation is different. If, after reading our publications, you have questions about how the law applies to your particular situation, contact us for a referral, or contact an attorney of your choice.

Dear Student:

Living on your own can be tough, but enrolling in school should not be. By following these simple steps, you can enroll in school quickly. If the school district will not let you enroll, we are here to help.

NOTE: See Questions below for more information

Step 1: Are You on Your Own?

You can enroll in school without the help of an adult if you are under age 21 and are:

- Living apart from your parents or other adults and supporting yourself; or
 - Married and living with your husband or wife.
 - *IMPORTANT: If you do not have a steady place to live and are not with your parents, you have a right to enroll in school IMMEDIATELY without giving the school any documents you do not have. You should go to your school registration office and tell them that you are an "unaccompanied homeless youth" and have special rights. AFTER you start school, you will have to give the school proof of where you live, your age, and that you have your "shots." You will also be asked to sign a statement about whether you have been suspended or expelled from school. If you are in this situation, stop reading here and look at our packet called "How to Enroll a Child who is Homeless" at www.elc-pa.org.*
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Step 2: How to Enroll

- Go to the central registration office in the school district where you are living. Bring with you proof of your age, where you live, and, if possible, written proof that you have received your "shots." If you do not have

written proof of your shots, ask the school district to ask your last school or a doctor who would know.

- Tell the school that you are an “emancipated minor” and you are enrolling on your own. If the school asks for “proof” that you are on your own, give the school a copy of “Tool 1.”
 - Also, remind the school to request your education records from your old school! Your old school must send the records to the new school within 10 business days.
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Step 3: What Happens If I Am NOT Enrolled in 5 Business Days?

- The law says that you should be enrolled and going to school in 5 business days after you complete Step 2. If that has not happened, call or visit the registration office and ask them why.
 - If you are still not enrolled, you should call the Pennsylvania Department of Education at this special number: (717) 783-6610
 - If the Pennsylvania Department of Education does not help, call us at the Education Law Center at (215) 238-6970.
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Step 4: Is there Anything Else I Should Know Before Starting School?

Yes. You can ask to talk to a school counselor:

- Find out what credits you need to graduate. Make sure that the school is giving you credit for ALL of the courses you have already taken.
- Give the school any school records you have, especially the most recent IEP if you receive special education services. The school must follow the IEP until you have a new IEP Team meeting. If you do not have an adult to help with the IEP, talk to the school about appointing a “surrogate parent.” Make sure to tell the school if you know someone who should make special education decisions for you.
- Tell the school if you need tutoring, want to be in a vocational program, or are interested in sports or some other special program.

Questions You May Have When Trying to Enroll Yourself and Start Going to Classes

1) Am I an “emancipated minor”?

If you living with your husband or wife, or living without help from an adult, you are an emancipated minor and can enroll yourself in school without the help of an adult.

2) Can the school district ask me to prove how old I am?

Yes, but they can only ask you to bring in ONE of the things in this list: birth certificate, passport, baptism certificate, sworn statement from a parent or relative, or a school record that has your birth date on it.

3) Can the school district ask me to have a physical or dental exam before enrolling me in school?

No! This information cannot be required as a condition of enrollment.

4) Is there anything that the school district cannot ask me to give them?

School districts can never ask for your social security number or card or any immigration papers.

5) If I am under 21 and have a passed the GED Tests, can I still enroll in school and work towards my diploma?

Yes, unless you are currently expelled from the school district in which you are trying to enroll.

6) Can the school district ask me to prove that I live in the school district?

Yes, but the school district must let you prove this in the way that is easy for you. Here are some examples of things you can give the school district to show that you live there: a lease, gas or electric bills, car registration, a statement by you signed in front of a notary that says where you live.

7) If I was in a discipline alternative school in another school district and now I want to enroll in a regular school, can the school district automatically place me in a special discipline school?

No, not unless you are currently expelled from your old school district for a weapons offense.

8) Am I “too old” to be in school if I am 19 or 20 years old?

No. You have a legal right to go to school in Pennsylvania until the end of the school term in which you have your 21st birthday or until you graduate with a regular high school diploma (whichever comes first).

*The information in this packet was prepared by the Education Law Center
www.elc-pa.org*

Tool 1
Emancipation Form

This form is to help you to enroll in school. If you are living on your own without your parents complete only Part A of this form. If you are married and living with your husband or wife, you should complete only Part B of this form. **Remember— you should ONLY fill out Part A or Part B, not both.**

Part A.

I live separate from my parents, my parents do not provide for my support, and I make decisions on my own behalf.

I live at:
_____.

My phone number is:

Name Date

OR

Part B.

I am married and currently live with my husband/wife.

I live
at: _____

—
My phone number is:

Name Date

If you want to prove that you live apart from your parents, here are some things that you can take to the school registration office.

1. A sworn written statement from parent (it should be notarized),

2. A letter from a social worker, teacher or some other adult from the school or an agency,
3. Two pieces of mail sent to you at an address in the school district,
4. A rental agreement that you signed for an apartment in the school district,
5. A letter from the person who owns your apartment,
6. Driver's license or state ID that shows address.

If you want to prove that you pay your own bills, here are some things that you can take to the school registration office.

1. Your rent receipts,
2. A letter from your landlord stating that you pay your own rent,
3. Receipts from food and clothing purchases that you have bought yourself,
4. Pay stubs,
5. A letter from someone at an agency or school who knows about your situation.