



# Coalition for Responsible Home Education

Advocating for Homeschooled Children

**Thank you for speaking with me about homeschool reform.** As your constituent, I appreciate your dedication to improving education and preventing child abuse.

Research on homeschooling has uncovered some issues of concern, which are listed below. Please use this information as a guide as you make decisions about homeschool laws and oversight in our state, and a springboard to learn more. I have included my story and my contact information should you or your staff have any questions.

## Child Abuse

The Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE) has compiled a brief that lays out some ways child abuse can manifest in homeschool settings.<sup>1</sup>

- **Abusive parents can use homeschooling to conceal abuse.** The Homeschooling's Invisible Children database contains hundreds of cases of severe child abuse and neglect in homeschool settings, and is searchable by state.<sup>2</sup> Stories like those of Calista Springer, Jeanette Maples, and Emani Moss point to a pattern of parents pulling their child from school after teachers report suspected abuse or neglect. In a 2014 study of child torture, University of Wisconsin pediatrician Barbara Knox wrote that many of cases she examined involved homeschooling that occurred after a prior CPS case was closed and brought with it an escalation and intensification of abuse.<sup>3</sup>
- **Child abuse in homeschool settings can be especially severe.** Homeschooling does not make healthy parents abusive. However, because homeschooling offers abusive parents the ability to isolate their children, it can escalate and prolong abuse when abuse does occur. Homeschooled students may be overrepresented in especially severe cases of child abuse. There is reason to believe that homeschooled children may die from abuse at a higher rate than other children.<sup>4</sup> In a 2014 study of child torture, University of Wisconsin pediatrician Barbara Knox found that 47% of the school-age child cases she identified involved children withdrawn from school to be homeschooled.<sup>5</sup>
- **Most states do not require background checks for homeschool parents.** Pennsylvania prohibits homeschooling when parents have committed a violent crime, sexual offense, or crime against children; Arkansas bars homeschooling when a sex offender lives in the home. No other state has a similar requirement. In addition to background checks, lawmakers should create a system for flagging cases where families have a concerning history of involvement with social services.<sup>6</sup>

## Educational Neglect

CRHE also compiled a brief on homeschooling and educational neglect, which lays out some of the ways educational neglect can manifest in homeschool settings.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Abuse in Homeschooling Environments," Coalition for Responsible Home Education, <https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/abuse-in-homeschooling-environments/>

<sup>2</sup> "Interactive Map," Homeschooling's Invisible Children, <http://hsinvisiblechildren.org/interactive-map/>

<sup>3</sup> Knox, B. L., Starling, S. P., Feldman, K.W., et al. Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma (March, 2014), 7-37.

<sup>4</sup> "Some Preliminary Data on Homeschool Child Fatalities," Homeschooling's Invisible Children, <http://hsinvisiblechildren.org/commentary/some-preliminary-data-on-homeschool-child-fatalities/>

<sup>5</sup> Knox, B. L., Starling, S. P., Feldman, K.W., et al. Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma (March, 2014), 7-37.

<sup>6</sup> Protecting at-risk homeschooled children issue brief, <https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/At-Risk-Children-Recommendations-CRHE.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> "Homeschooling and Educational Neglect," Coalition for Responsible Home Education, <https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/policy-issues/educational-neglect/>



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- **Most states do not require evidence that education is taking place.** Only a handful of states require homeschool parents to have their children tested or evaluated. The result is a lack of accountability that can allow educational neglect to go unchecked.<sup>8</sup> The limits of current law can make it difficult for even concerned relatives to ensure that children are being educated.
- **The public is not fully informed about homeschool success rates.** While some homeschooled children do very well, this success is not universal. Unfortunately, existing studies draw on volunteer samples that are not representative of the demographics or diverse experiences of homeschooled students overall.
- **Homeschooled students lag behind their peers in math.** A wide range of data, including test scores from Alaska and Arkansas, suggest that homeschooled students perform below their public school peers in math. Several studies have found that homeschool graduates are less likely than other students to major in STEM fields once in college, suggesting that homeschooling serves as a barrier to many students' entrance into fields that require a background in math.<sup>9</sup>
- **Homeschool graduates may under-attend college.** While homeschooled students faced skepticism from admissions officers in previous decades, essentially all colleges and universities today accept homeschool graduates. However, a growing body of data suggests that homeschooled students attend college at a lower rate than average.<sup>10</sup> While more research is needed, it appears that being homeschooled may make a student less likely to attend college than other students.

## Homeschool and Public School Cooperation

- Homeschooled children benefit from access to public school activities.
- Part-time enrollment increases the educational opportunities available.
- Public school access increases the number of eyes on homeschooled students, thereby raising the likelihood of intervention in cases of child abuse or neglect.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I support homeschool reform because:

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Please feel free to contact me at (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_.

**Thank you!**

<sup>8</sup> "How Oversight Would Have Helped," Coalition for Responsible Home Education,

<https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/how-oversight-would-have-helped-collected-stories/>

<sup>9</sup> "The Homeschool Math Gap," CRHE, <https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/the-homeschool-math-gap/>; Clive R. Belfield, "Home-Schooling in the U.S.," Occasional Paper no. 88, Jan. 2004.

<sup>10</sup> "Should We Be Concerned about Low SAT Taking?" CRHE, <https://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org/should-we-be-concerned-about-low-homeschool-sat-taking/>; Pennings, Ray, et al., "Cardus Education Survey," CARDUS (2011), [http://www.tpcs.org/about-us/Cardus-Cardus\\_Education\\_Survey\\_Phase\\_I\\_Report.pdf](http://www.tpcs.org/about-us/Cardus-Cardus_Education_Survey_Phase_I_Report.pdf)