

**Home Education Advisory Council
Minutes—November 8, 2011**

Chairman Abbey Lawrence called the regular meeting of the Home Education Advisory Council to order at 3:40 p.m. in room 12 of Londergan Hall in Concord, New Hampshire.

Members Present: Marc Boyd, Barrett Christina, Keith Pfeifer, Chris Hamilton, Abbey Lawrence, Representative Joe Pitre, Roberta Tenney, Heather Wheeler, and Dennis Wyman.

Visitors present: Michael Faiella and Jane Grady.

Minutes: Chris Hamilton corrected the Rules Subcommittee section of the September 13, 2011 minutes to read as follows:

Rules Subcommittee Report: Chris Hamilton distributed ~~the final draft of~~ *suggested changes to* the rules subcommittee suggested changes. Dennis Wyman moved to accept the revisions to Ed. 315 as presented by the subcommittee. The motion passed unanimously.

The Council approved the corrected September 13, 2011 meeting minutes by general consent.

Announcements: Abbey announced that a guest from VLACS, Linda Higgins, would attend the December 13 meeting.

Chairman's Report:

- Abbey reported that she had spoken with the superintendent of schools in Freedom, New Hampshire about district policies. The concerns they discussed had been raised by a homeschooler and, as it turned out, were the result of a misunderstanding on the part of the homeschooler about district homeschooling policies.
- The State Board of Education approved the Initial Proposal of Ed. 315 at the October 12 SBOE meeting.
- Abbey asked Jane Grady to discuss colleges and career schools that are requiring homeschoolers to provide state-issued diplomas as part of the admissions process. (See attached)

Department of Education Report: Roberta had nothing to report.

Legislative Report: Chris will distribute an updated legislative report later.

New Business:

There was no new business.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jane Grady
(substituting for Dennis Wyman)

Hi Abbey,

For the Council meeting on October 11:

You asked me to let you know about the questions that homeschoolers have been having about colleges or career schools requiring a state-issued diploma for homeschoolers. Of course, admission requirements are matters of institutional policy but some of the schools have been claiming that their policies are required by recent changes in federal policies.

There have been no changes to federal policies for homeschooler eligibility. I think the confusion is because admissions personnel are misunderstanding and/or misapplying recent changes to requirements for recipients of Federal Student Aid (FSA) funds. Those recent changes were included in the summer of 2011 (June or July?) to address situations in which there were reasons to doubt the validity of diplomas issued by for-profit "diploma mills."

These links (and their pasted excerpts) are quite clear about Federal policy.

New Hampshire does NOT issue secondary school completion credentials to homeschoolers. New Hampshire homeschooling law (RSA 193-A) neither requires such a credential, nor provides a mechanism for obtaining one.

Admission requirements are matters of institutional policy. Some college/career school admissions personnel have explained that the requirement for homeschoolers to produce a state-issued diploma is necessary because of recent changes in federal policies. They are mistaken. The following appeared in the October 29, 2010 Federal Register regarding FSA student eligibility: *"Section 668.16(p) does not apply to homeschooled students. For guidance pertaining to homeschooled students, please see Chapter I of Volume I of the Federal Student Aid Handbook."*

1. http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1_I_12FSAHbkVoll.pdf

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

To receive FSA funds, a student must be qualified to study at the postsecondary level, A student qualifies if she:

- has a high school diploma (this can be from a foreign school if it is equivalent to a U.S. high school diploma);
- has the recognized equivalent* of a high school diploma, such as a general education development or GED certificate;
- **has completed homeschooling at the secondary level;**
- has passed a Department-approved ability-to-benefit test*; or
- has satisfactorily completed six credits of college work that are applicable to a degree or certificate offered by the school.

A student may self-certify on the FAFSA that he has received a high school diploma or GED or **that he has completed secondary school through homeschooling as defined by state law.** If a student indicates that he has a diploma or GED, your school isn't required to ask for a

copy-except as noted below-but if your school requires one for admission, then you must rely on that copy of the diploma or GED and not on the student's certification alone.

Homeschooling

Though homeschooled students are not considered to have a high school diploma or equivalent, **they are eligible to receive FSA funds if their secondary school education was in a homeschool that state law treats as a home or private school.** **Some** states issue a secondary school completion credential to homeschoolers. **If** this is the case in the state where the student was homeschooled, she must obtain this credential in order to be eligible for FSA funds. She can include in her homeschooling self-certification (see above) that she received this state credential.

2. http://www.ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN021_1.html

With regard to documenting a home-schooled student's completion of secondary school in a home-schooled setting, **an institution may accept a home-schooled student's self-certification that he or she completed secondary school in a home school setting,** just as it may accept a high school graduate's self-certification of his or her receipt of a high school diploma. Self-certification of the receipt of a high-school diploma is commonly done through an answer to a question on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). However, because the FAFSA does not include a question regarding home-school completion, institutions may accept such self-certifications in institutional application documents, in letters from the students, or in some other appropriate record.

3. <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/aideligibility.~sp?tab=funding>

Eligibility for federal student aid is based on financial need and on several other factors. The financial aid administrator at the college or career school you plan to attend will determine your eligibility.

have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, pass an ability-to-benefit (ATB) test approved by the U.S. Department of Education, meet other standards your state establishes that the Department approves, **complete a high school education in a home school setting that is treated as such under state law,** or have satisfactorily completed six credit hours or the equivalent course work toward a degree or certificate.