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South Dakota

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August 2, 2010

Compulsory Attendance for 5-Year-Olds Starts This Fall

In 2006, the South Dakota Legislature lowered the age of compulsory attendance starting with the 2010–2011 school year. Children who are age 5 by September 1 will be of compulsory school age starting this fall. Compulsory age ends at a student's 18th birthday, or upon graduating.

If you have a child who has reached, or will reach, his 5th birthday by September 1, you'll need to file the "Application for Public School Exemption Certificate" form with your local superintendent.

The first time, only, parents file for a specific child, the parents must include either a certified copy of the child's birth certificate, or an affidavit (witnessed or notarized by two or more witnesses) swearing or affirming that the child for whom the excuse is being requested is the same as the person on the child's birth certificate.

Parents must keep a certified copy of the child's birth certificate on file in their home at all times while the child is being homeschooled. Under some circumstances, the Department of Education can demand access to your attendance and progress records, so it is appropriate to keep those records.

Parents must provide instruction in language arts and math for a period of time equivalent to what a child of the same age in public school would receive. For additional details, see HSLDA's summary of South Dakota homeschool law on our website, or call our office.

The compulsory age expansion will not help children in conventional schools. Research shows that starting schooling earlier in an institutional setting produces no long-term benefits.

And it won't help homeschooled children. Their parents already know the right time to start their instruction.

So there are no winners with the expansion of compulsory school age. And the loser is freedom.

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