

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES
GUIDELINES

Virginia Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Student Services

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgements | 2 |
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| Overview of Services..... | 3 |
| Eligibility for Homebound Services..... | 4 |
| Initiation of Service..... | 4 |
| Review and Termination of Service..... | 4 |
| Hours of Homebound Instruction..... | 5 |
| Responsibility for Provision of Services..... | 5 |
| • The School Division..... | 5 |
| • The Program Coordinator..... | 5 |
| • The School Homebound Coordinator/Classroom Teacher..... | 6 |
| • The Student/Parent/Guardian..... | 6 |
| The Homebound Teacher..... | 6 |
| • Professional Qualifications..... | 7 |
| • Responsibilities of the Homebound Teacher..... | 7 |
| Role of the Physician or Clinical Psychologist Providing Certification..... | 7 |
| Use of On-line Instruction..... | 8 |
| Reimbursement of Instruction Cost..... | 8 |
| Glossary of Terms and Phrases..... | 9 |
| Questions and Answers..... | 11 |

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HANDBOOK FOR HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

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Introduction

The Board of Education through the regulations establishing *Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* requires in 8 VAC 20-131-180 that:

Homebound instruction shall be made available to students who are confined at home or in a health care facility for periods that would prevent normal school attendance based upon certification of need by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist. For students eligible for special education or related services, the Individualized Education Program committee must revise the IEP, as appropriate, to direct off-site instruction. Credit for the work shall be awarded when it is done under the supervision of a teacher licensed by the Board of Education and meets the requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-110.

Schools are encouraged to pursue alternative means to deliver instruction to accommodate student needs through emerging technologies and other similar means. Standard units of credit shall be awarded for successful completion of such courses when the course is equivalent to that offered in the regular school program and the work is done under the supervision of a licensed teacher. Verified units of credit may be earned when the student has successfully completed the requirements and passed the SOL test associated with the course. The local school board shall develop policies governing this method of delivery of instruction that shall include the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-110 and the administration of required SOL tests prescribed by 8 VAC 20-131-30.

This handbook has been developed to provide guidance for school divisions in the provision of homebound instructional services.

Overview of Services

Homebound instruction is designed to provide continuity of educational services between the classroom and home or health care facility, for students whose medical needs, both physical and psychiatric, do not allow school attendance for a limited period of time. Homebound instruction may be used to supplement the classroom program for students with health impairments whose conditions may interfere with regular school attendance (e.g., students receiving dialysis or radiation/chemotherapy; or students with other serious health conditions). Students must be enrolled in a public school in Virginia in order to receive homebound instruction.

Homebound instruction is not intended to supplant school services and is by design temporary. While no specific number of days can be set due to the many complex situations that arise for students, instruction should take place in the school setting to the fullest extent possible. The student's inability to attend school for medical reasons, both physical and psychiatric, must be certified by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist.

Continuity between school-based instruction and homebound services for each student is essential.

Regular communication with appropriate school personnel, particularly the student's classroom teacher, should be maintained by the homebound teacher. The homebound teacher must use assignments and materials provided by the classroom teacher or supervisor of instruction. Should an online provider be used to deliver instruction, the school pacing guidelines must be followed. For schools to be reimbursed for providing homebound services, teachers licensed by the Virginia Department of Education must provide direct instruction or oversee the use of an online program. The goals of homebound services are to sustain continuity of instruction and to facilitate the student returning to school. For students expected to be out of school in excess of nine calendar weeks, a homebound transition plan should be prepared by the physician or licensed clinical psychologist in collaboration with the parent/guardian and school personnel and recorded by the school division. The plan must include the student's need for extending homebound services, the anticipated duration of the absence, and proposals for the student's return to the classroom setting. The duration and extent of homebound services is a school division decision based upon the physician's or licensed clinical psychologist's certification of need.

Eligibility for Homebound Services

Eligibility for homebound instruction is determined on the basis of medical evidence submitted by the licensed physician or the licensed clinical psychologist. The school division reviews all requests for completeness of information and appropriateness of the request. School divisions will request that the parent/guardian sign a release of information form allowing the physician or licensed clinical psychologist to share information or clarify the information provided for approval of homebound instruction. Approval is determined by school division personnel on the basis of the student's documented need for service. School divisions will take into consideration a student's participation in extracurricular activities or employment when determining eligibility for homebound instruction.

The Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team must amend the IEP to meet the special education student's temporary instructional needs based on the approved certification of need for homebound instruction. Parental consent must be obtained to amend the IEP, prior to initiation of homebound services.

Reimbursement for instruction of special education students who have been suspended or expelled is not permitted through the homebound instruction budget. Educational services in the IEP must be provided by the school division through special education funding and other sources of funds, excluding homebound.

Initiation of Service

Homebound instruction should be initiated as soon as possible following receipt of the request by the school division, but no later than five instructional days upon approval of the request. Medical or psychological information is submitted directly to the staff person designated by the school division in its local procedure. When administrative processing delays the initiation of homebound services, efforts to provide homebound services should be documented and delays explained to the parent/guardian. If the school division experiences difficulty finding a licensed homebound instructor, the school division shall determine whether compensatory services for the student are warranted.

Review and Termination of Service

Students receiving homebound instruction should return to the school setting as soon as possible. Homebound services are always considered temporary and are based on the premise that instruction should take place in the school setting to the fullest extent possible. Extension of services beyond nine calendar weeks is determined by additional medical or psychological information from the attending physician or licensed clinical psychologist. The homebound teacher will assist the student, family, and school with the student's transition back to school.

However, other support staff , such as the school nurse, school counselor, or school psychologist, may be more appropriately assigned to the student for transitional purposes depending on the nature of the student’s needs. If a student has an Individualized Educational Program, the IEP team must amend the IEP upon termination of homebound services in order to return the student to the school setting.

Hours of Homebound Instruction

The following are suggested guidelines for school divisions for the minimum hours of homebound instruction to be provided and may not be applicable in all instances. Every effort should be made to ensure academic progress; however, course credit must still be earned according to class requirements.

1. Elementary school students –five hours per week
2. Middle school students - eight hours per week
3. High school students –five hours per week for two subjects or ten hours per week for three or four subjects

Responsibility for Provision of Services

The School Division

The school division is responsible for providing instructional services for all public school students who must be temporarily confined at home or in a health care facility. The school division is also responsible for providing homebound services to a student enrolled in the school division who is confined in another county or city in Virginia and to qualified students confined in another state, if those students meet all the homebound eligibility requirements. Additional requirements include:

1. Developing policies and procedures for providing homebound services
2. Designating an individual to coordinate the services for the school division, including supervision of instruction provided
3. Submitting an annual report for reimbursement
4. Employing teachers licensed to teach in Virginia
5. Facilitating the return of the student to school
6. Providing services in a timely manner
7. Ensuring the continuity of instructional services to the student

The Program Coordinator

The individual designated to coordinate homebound services for a school division is a vital link in the appropriate provision of services. The school division shall include processes for the following activities in its’ local procedures:

1. Documenting the receipt of requests for homebound instruction
2. Validating requests for homebound instruction
3. Communicating the status of the request to appropriate school personnel
4. Coordinating the overall provision of services in a timely manner
5. Considering the possibility of available technology (distance broadcasting, robotics, etc.) for the student to participate in certain classroom activities from home
6. Facilitating the student’s return to instruction in the classroom
7. Completing the annual report

8. Oversight of instruction provided

The School Homebound Coordinator and Classroom Teacher

A student receiving homebound instruction is maintained on the class roll. The classroom teacher with the assistance of the school homebound coordinator will:

1. Provide the homebound teacher with appropriate instructional materials and information
2. Be responsible for grading procedures in collaboration with the homebound teacher
3. Maintain close contact with the homebound teacher or the program coordinator supervising on-line instruction to monitor the instructional progress of the student
4. Collaborate with the homebound teacher about the curriculum and appropriate instructional strategies

The Student/Parent/Guardian

The student and parent/guardian are expected to work cooperatively with the assigned homebound teacher and school personnel to:

1. Obtain certification from the physician or licensed clinical psychologist requesting homebound services, and complete parental signature forms in order to begin homebound instruction
2. Have a responsible adult in the home during the entire period of instruction
3. Provide adequate facilities for teaching (quiet room without interruptions, with a table, chairs and appropriate supplies)
4. Have the student ready for instruction at the time designated by the homebound teacher
5. Supervise daily homework
6. Notify the teacher, prior to the scheduled visit, if there is a contagious illness in the home or if there is an emergency
7. Keep all appointments with the homebound teacher (excessively missed appointments may result in suspension of services)
8. Make every effort to complete school assignments
9. Advise the homebound teacher of any change in the student's status that would necessitate modification or termination of homebound services
10. Notify the school division coordinator of excessively missed appointments or tardiness by the homebound teacher

The Homebound Teacher

Professional Qualifications

As stated in § 22.1-299 of the *Code of Virginia*, no teacher shall be regularly employed by a school board or paid from public funds unless such teacher holds a license issued by the Board of Education.

An individual employed as a homebound teacher must hold a Virginia teacher's license. Homebound teachers must be employed and supervised by designated officials of the school division. A homebound teacher should have a broad background of professional training and experience to adapt instruction to each student's needs. Teachers engaging in academic instruction in the home should also be able to adjust to a variety of home situations and be knowledgeable of cultural uniqueness.

The person supervising on-line instruction must hold a Virginia teacher's license.

Responsibilities of the Homebound Teacher

Persons serving as homebound teachers must:

1. Maintain close contact with the student's teachers, counselor, or the program coordinator to receive and implement appropriate educational programs
2. Maintain an accurate record of the hours of instruction provided for each assigned student and file such information with the designated school division representative
3. Submit the student's completed work to the designated school representative prior to the end of the grading period and maintain written documentation of work completed with the homebound records, or in cases where on-line instruction is used, a written record must be provided

The homebound teacher is responsible for assigning grades only for the work covered during the period of homebound instruction if requested by the local division. In divisions where the homebound teacher returns work for the classroom teacher to grade, the work should be returned in a timely manner and so noted in the homebound teacher's records. These grades are to be averaged with the other grades earned by the student in the general education program during regular attendance. The homebound teacher is an essential part of the team of persons who provide materials and instruction to enable the homebound student to maintain academic progress while not attending the regular school program. Homebound instruction is a modification of the general education program.

Role of Physician or Clinical Psychologist Providing Certification

Homebound instruction is designed to provide continuity of educational services between the classroom and home or health care facility, for students whose medical needs, both physical and psychiatric, do not allow school attendance for a limited period of time. At the time of the initial request, the physician or clinical psychologist providing certification for homebound instruction must provide in writing to the school division the following:

1. Name of the student
2. Medical need for homebound instruction
3. Length of time homebound instruction is anticipated
4. Amount and kind of activity suggested for the student while on homebound instruction
5. A transition plan if the initial homebound instruction request is for longer than nine calendar weeks

Since homebound instruction is not intended to supplant school services and is by design temporary, if it is necessary to extend homebound instruction beyond the initial time frame or longer than nine calendar weeks, a transition plan is requested outlining the following:

1. Name of the student
2. Justification for the extension of homebound instruction
3. Additional time homebound instruction is anticipated
4. Specific steps planned to return the student to classroom instruction
5. Changes in amount and kind of activity for the student during extended homebound instruction

Use of On-line Instruction for Homebound Students

Homebound instruction may be provided to eligible students utilizing on-line technology. In order to be eligible for reimbursement, the program content must be verified by the homebound instruction coordinator and must be taught by licensed teachers. Individual student instruction shall be monitored by a teacher licensed by the Virginia Board of Education or by the homebound instruction coordinator, as long as the coordinator holds a license to teach in Virginia.

Reimbursement of Instruction Cost

Reimbursement payments are made to school divisions by the Virginia Department of Education in the year following the delivery of services. The amount of the reimbursement is based on the prior year's data submitted by school divisions using a composite index of ability-to-pay approach. Reimbursement for homebound services is made to a school division for payment made directly to licensed teachers employed by the division or for technology assisted programs that meet the aforementioned criteria. Payments do not include third-party payments to health care facilities. Reimbursements are based on actual instructional time documented by the homebound teacher. The Department of Education does not reimburse school divisions for planning time, travel, fringe benefits, computer equipment, software, or network fees. School divisions will use the Single Sign-on Web System (SSWS) to submit a request for reimbursement, including verification of the students' medical need for services, the name(s) of the homebound teacher(s), teacher(s) license number, the number of hours of instruction provided, the hourly rate as determined by the school division for instruction, verification that instructional hours were provided by a teacher licensed in Virginia or meeting the criteria for on-line instruction, and other information that may be requested by the Virginia Department of Education. Specific instructions and deadlines for filing the homebound report will be communicated to school divisions, on an annual basis, in a Superintendent's Memo. All homebound forms, including certification, termination, and requests for reimbursement of state funds, should be properly signed and maintained by the school division.

The Glossary of Terms and Phrases

Homebound Instruction - means academic instruction provided to students who are confined at home or in a health care facility for periods that would prevent normal school attendance based upon certification of need by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist. For a student with a disability, the Individual Education Program (IEP) team must determine the delivery of services, including the number of hours of services.

Confined – restricted or limited from attendance at a regular public school during the regular school hours due to physical, medical, or emotional impairments based on certification of need. The definition does not apply to situations wherein students are confined due to discipline or non-medically based situations.

Temporary – existing for a short time, or for a limited time. The term implies an arrangement established with the intent of preparing the student for returning to school as soon as possible. It is expected that the time determined for homebound services will be based on the premise that every student should be maintained in the regular school setting to the greatest extent possible.

Licensed Teacher – an individual who has met all the current requirements for a teacher in the Commonwealth of Virginia and holds a license from the Virginia State Board of Education, or, if teaching on-line, a license from Virginia or another state.

Licensed Physician – an individual who has been licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine to practice medicine. In regard to the provision of homebound services, it is expected that the physician will only certify those conditions that fall within their documented experience and training.

Psychiatrist – an individual who has been licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine and trained to practice in the science of treating mental diseases. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor (M.D.).

Licensed Clinical Psychologist – a psychologist licensed by the Virginia Board of Psychology. For the purposes of eligibility, the licensed clinical psychologist must either be in a treatment relationship or establishing a treatment relationship with the student to meet requirements for requesting homebound services.

Regular School Year – the period of time between the opening day of school in the fall and the closing day of school for that school term.

Eligible Student – a student enrolled in a public school for which the need for homebound instruction has been appropriately documented and certified.

Home-based Instruction - services that are delivered in the home setting (or other agreed upon setting) in accordance with the student's individual education program. Home-based instruction is provided to students who are removed from school by the division for disciplinary or other reasons. The services provided are consistent with those for homebound students. The primary distinction is that no medical referral is required and no reimbursement is provided for the services.

Home Instruction –instruction of a student or students by a parent or parents, guardian, or other person having control or charge of such student or students as an alternative to attendance in a public or private school in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia (22.1-254.1). This instruction may also be termed home schooling.

Home Tutoring –instruction by a tutor or teacher with qualifications prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education, as an alternative to attendance in a public or private school and approved by the division

superintendent in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia. This tutoring is often used as an alternative form of home schooling but is not home instruction as defined in the Code of Virginia (§22.1-254).

Transition Plan – plan provided by the licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist to explain the need for extended homebound instruction. The plan shall include: name of the student, justification for the extension of homebound instruction, additional time homebound instruction is anticipated, and specific steps planned to return the student to classroom instruction.

Questions and Answers

The following Frequently Asked Questions are provided to assist school divisions. The answers supplied are general and may vary depending upon other facts involved in an individual case.

Q. Can either the school division or parents appeal the appropriateness of the services or the certification?

A. Decisions about the appropriateness of services can be made after all the facts and other information have been collected. While no formal appeal procedure is set in the handbook, in special education cases there may be a complaint within the special education procedures. See “Complaint Procedures” in the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, effective March 27, 2002*, 8 VAC 20-80-78.

Q. If a student lives in one school division in Virginia but attends school in another division or another state, which division has the responsibility for providing homebound services if they are needed?

A. Eligibility for homebound services is based upon the student’s enrollment in public school and the inability to attend school. Responsibility for providing services rests with the public school division in which the student is enrolled. Enrollment is based on the residency requirement set forth in the Code of Virginia (§22.1-3).

Q. If two or more eligible students need instruction in the same subject at the same time and they live in the same home, such as a foster home or other group living facility, can they be instructed in a group?

A. In this instance, it is reasonable to provide homebound services in a group setting, unless age and grade level or other circumstances unique to a student’s condition would dictate a one-to-one situation.

Q. How should reimbursement be reported when more than one student was instructed at the same time?

A. Reimbursement is based upon instructional hours delivered by the homebound teacher and not on the number of students instructed.

Q. What forms must be sent to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)?

A. Each school division submits an end-of-year report of homebound instruction services delivered to the VDOE. Reimbursement is based upon the information provided in this report. School divisions will:

1. Use the Single Sign-on Web System to submit the annual report electronically
2. Enter an instructor’s current Virginia license number; the teacher name will be displayed in the list.
3. Enter the hourly rate and number of hours the teacher has worked; total amount paid will be calculated in the appropriate field.
4. Submit the completed annual Report for Homebound Instruction to the VDOE
5. Print and mail the report **signed by the school division superintendent to the School Health Specialist at DOE.**

Q. Is it permissible to use medical information submitted by a nurse, dentist, chiropractor physician, social worker, or licensed professional counselor to determine eligibility for homebound instruction?

A. No. Only a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist can provide the certification of need for homebound service.

Q. When students enrolled in a public school are hospitalized in health care or psychiatric facilities that provide no education service, is the school division obligated to provide homebound instruction in the health care facility?

A. Eligibility for homebound service is based upon the student’s enrollment in a public school and the inability to attend school. Responsibility for providing the homebound services, regardless of location, is with the public

school division where the student is enrolled. School divisions may contract with other school divisions to provide homebound service when distance is a factor.

Q. Will the VDOE reimburse a school division for homebound service for a student to remain at home to care for a newborn child?

A. No. The VDOE can only provide reimbursement for the eligible student (mother) until such time as the student is recovered and able to return to school.

Q. Will the VDOE reimburse a school division for providing homebound instruction to a group of pregnant teenagers at a school location?

A. No. The VDOE will only reimburse school divisions for providing homebound services to students confined to home or health care facility for medical reasons. If a student is able to attend school to receive educational services, the student is not eligible for homebound instruction.

Q. Does the VDOE reimburse a school division for homebound services for a student parentally placed in a private school?

A. No, homebound services are provided only to students enrolled in public schools.

Q. Should students in schools using block scheduling receive more homebound services than other secondary school students?

A. The number of hours of services a student receives is designed to meet the needs of the individual student, and determined by the school division representative.

Q. Does the VDOE reimburse school divisions for special education students who need homebound services?

A. Yes, but the VDOE will reimburse school divisions for homebound instruction provided only to those students for whom there is certification of need by a licensed physician or a licensed clinical psychologist.

Q. Does the VDOE reimburse school divisions for expenses incurred in providing homebound instruction to special education and regular education classroom students for reasons other than medical concerns (discipline, home-based instruction, or non-medically based situations)?

A. No.

Q. Can a student's schedule be modified while on homebound?

A. Yes, a student's schedule can be modified.

Q. Is it appropriate to assume a student will receive course credit for instruction received?

A. Instruction is provided for students to progress in courses. While every effort is made to encourage academic progress, course credit is not guaranteed for students receiving homebound instruction.