

OHIO

Police Harassing Homeschoolers? Here's What to Do.

Dear HSLDA Members and Friends:

Home School Legal Defense Association is receiving numerous reports about truant officers and police showing up unannounced and uninvited at private homes to “check up” and see if families are homeschooling.

If this happens to your family, what should you do?

The primary thing to remember is that there’s no cause to panic—HSLDA is here to support its members in these types of situations. But first, some background.

ADMINISTRATIVE DELAYS

These are challenging times for public schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has produced an unprecedented flood in new homeschooling families. Public school staff have been struggling to process homeschool paperwork and, in many cases, have not been able to update attendance records in a timely manner.

This means that some public schools are counting children absent whose notice of intent to homeschool has been sent but not processed. And because truancy enforcement is often handled at the school level in Ohio, school officials are sending out police and truant officers to investigate these alleged absences.

In some cases, the police have been polite and professional. In other cases, they have been reportedly rude, harassing, and intimidating. But no matter how the police act, it is always unsettling when an officer shows up at your house investigating you for any reason.

This is not an appropriate way for schools to “check up” on families who are homeschooling.

What public schools should be doing is checking with their attendance office or superintendent to see if a family has submitted a notice of intent to homeschool—*before* sending out a team of police to check up on the family.

WHAT TO DO

If police, or any other government official, does show up unannounced at your home demanding information, whether polite or not, remember your rights.

The United States Constitution protects you from

unwarranted intrusion into your “persons, houses, papers, and effects.” I would say that homeschooling papers fits into the broader category of “papers.”

Nevertheless, it’s also a good idea to remember that the police are doing their job and did not “ask” to be sent to your house. In some cases, they may even disagree with being used as school attendance officers.

While that is certainly no excuse for an officer to be bellicose, you can defuse a tense situation by being polite. While you might be constitutionally permitted to slam the door in their face, that is not necessarily the best thing to do.

Here is what I suggest. If you’re an HSLDA member—*call us immediately*. I will be happy to advise you right then and there and even talk to the government agents, if necessary.

Otherwise, you can always have a brief conversation explaining that you have done all that you are required to do by law in order to homeschool (if true) and that you are currently in compliance with the compulsory attendance law of Ohio. You are not required to demonstrate any proof of this, although you may if you choose to as demonstrating evidence may immediately resolve the situation.

I have sent a letter to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Paolo DeMaria, asking for his assistance in

curtailing this unnecessary and intrusive practice. You can read a copy of the letter I sent to him [here](#).

HSLDA is the world's largest homeschooling organization. We exist because of the support of our members.

If you know someone who is homeschooling without the benefit of HSLDA membership, will you tell them about us and encourage them to [join](#)? Together we can protect homeschooling freedom for everyone.

Mike P. Donnelly
Mike Donnelly
HSLDA ATTORNEY

