



Earning a GED or an HSED

For many youth in care, finishing high school is challenging. Dealing with the family issues that brought you into care, and dealing with the complexities of growing up in care can absorb a lot of the energy that is needed to finish high school. But don't let that stop you from pursuing your dreams. The following will help you start your journey on getting a GED or HSED.

Differences Between a GED and an HSED

Most students earn the Certificate of *General Equivalency Diploma* (GED) by passing five exams in academic areas and career awareness. Most people need to prepare for these exams by studying math, social studies, English, and developing their reading and writing skills. Preparatory classes are offered at technical colleges, some school districts, and by some commercial programs for which you pay fees.

To earn a *High School Equivalency Diploma* (HSED), you will need to pass the GED, plus show proficiency in health, career awareness, citizenship and employability skills. Nearly 10,000 Wisconsin adults will earn an HSED this year. Those who do will make nearly \$100,000 more (on average) over a lifetime than those who stopped at a GED.

Many employers and apprenticeship programs, including local, state and federal jobs, as well as the military branches, require their applicants to have more than the GED. This is where the HSED may be of benefit to you.

Whether you earn your GED or HSED, here is some basic information to get you started.

First Step

The first step is to meet with a counselor from a high school, technical college, or a certified high school equivalency program in your area to determine what you need to do to earn a GED or HSED. The counselor will test your reading skills, talk to you about your career interests and help you determine which route to the GED is available to you. You can find a good description of the Wisconsin

GED and HSED programs at:

http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/pdf/gedhsed.pdf

There are specific guidelines about the minimum age and the graduation status of the high school class that you were in ninth grade. The counselor you meet with will help you determine when you are eligible to take the exams and earn the GED or the HSED.

Before you begin a program, make sure that you are working with a program that is certified by the state of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. You can check that out by contacting the department at http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/index.html, or by talking to your high school or technical school GED/HSED counselors. **There are scams** on the internet and in some cities that may promise to certify you but are not recognized by the state. They will only take your money. The high school and technical school programs and counseling are **free of charge**.

If there is one recommendation that career counselors make, it is to finish high school. Earning a GED or HSED can take a long time, and require long hours studying each subject. Most GED/HSED classes are done in a quiet classroom where you work on an individual basis in GED/HSED preparation manuals.



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Earning a GED/HSED, continued

Passing the Exam

To pass the exam, there is a minimum score for each subject. For example, you cannot earn a GED or HSED by passing all but the math. You have to learn the math and pass it at a minimum level. GED/HSED preparation can be challenging if you do not like studying quietly, and being in a quiet classroom setting for long hours.



Whatever the reason you may not have finished high school, here are some facts about adults who have not earned a high school diploma:

- Only 55% of young adult dropouts were employed, compared with 74% of high school graduates and 87% of four-year college graduates.
- Of those who fail to graduate with their peers:
 - One out of four people eventually earn a diploma or HSED.
 - One out of four people earn the GED.
 - About 50 % of people do not earn a high school credential of any kind.
- 15% of Wisconsin adults over 25 (approximately 500,000) do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. About 10,000 of these adults will decide to earn either a high school equivalency diploma (HSED) or certificate of general educational development (GED) each year.

Proof of Earning Your GED/HSED

Once you earn a GED or HSED, it is likely that your employers or educational institutions will require certified transcripts as proof you have graduated. You can obtain those by requesting an order form through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction at www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsis/let/pdf/ged-order.pdf.

HSED/GED Resources

The best resources to learn about the GED and the HSED can be found at these state websites:

- GED/HSED Homepage:
http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/index.html
- GED/HSED Brochure:
http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/pdf/gedhsed.pdf
- Frequently Asked Questions
http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/pdf/ged_faq.pdf
- List of the testing centers in Wisconsin
http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/pdf/websitecontractmaster.pdf
- Warning against fake GED programs.
http://dpi.wi.gov/ged_hsed/pdf/fakeged.pdf

If you think earning a GED or HSED is the route you need to take to a better future, go to these sites above to learn what you can, and make that appointment with a school counselor. Good luck, work hard, and give yourself a pat on the back for taking an important step to a better future.



Foster Care & Adoption Resource Center Library Resources

(You can find the following by going to this link wi-fostercareandadoption.org/plugins/library/advancedsearch.asp.)

- **And Still I Rise**, book written by youth in care. Applying to college, and succeeding once they get there, can be two enormous hurdles for foster youth. Many are intimidated by higher education for personal and financial reasons. They may come from poor families where college was not

considered an option. In these stories, foster teens write about how they managed to successfully focus on college.

- **Tickets To Success**, by Jim Fay.
- **School Survival Guide for Kids with LD**, by Rhoda Cummings, EdD.

Sources for this tip sheet

- .American Youth Policy Forum, 2003.
- DPI links listed in tipsheet.