

YOUTH RIGHTS IN PENNSYLVANIA: GETTING A GED

What is a General Equivalency Diploma (GED)?

The GED is a diploma that is viewed by most colleges and employers as an equivalent to a high school diploma.

How do I earn a GED?

The GED is obtained by taking a written test, which includes multiple choice questions and an essay. It has five sections:

- 1) Language Arts– Writing
- 2) Language Arts– Reading
- 3) Math
- 4) Social Studies
- 5) Science



In order to obtain a GED certificate, you must pass all 5 sections of the test. If you pass some sections but not all, you can retake just those sections that you did not pass. Passing the GED test is difficult. It is very helpful to take a GED preparation class.

Where do I take the GED or the preparation class?

Check out www.able.state.us/cwp/, the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, for information on GED preparation classes and testing sites.

What should I bring with me when I take the GED test?

If you are over 18 years of age you must provide all of the following:

- A driver's license or state-issued ID card
- Proof of residency (utility bill, library card, letter from caseworker stating current residence, etc.)
- A fee (fees vary depending on the testing site)

If you are under 18 you must ALSO provide the following information:

- Withdrawal letter from your home school district
- Court order or letter of employment

It is important to note: You cannot receive your GED until you turn 18 years old or your high school class graduates (whichever happens first). This is true even if you take the test and pass early. However, you can get your scores before you turn 18 if you need to show someone that you passed.

GED vs. High School Diploma

While a GED is technically the equivalent of a high school diploma, you should keep some things in mind when considering whether to go for your diploma or a GED:

- While both a GED and a high school diploma are generally considered adequate for many entry-level positions, often employers at higher paying jobs may show preference for a high school diploma.
- A GED will be sufficient for admission into community colleges, but many four-year institutions often show preference for a high school diploma because your transcript will show all the courses you took, grades you received, etc.
- All branches of the military accept GED holders, but they limit the number of GED holders that they accept every year. Earning one of these limited slots can be very competitive.

Earning a GED can be a great option for those whose life circumstances have put school on hold for one reason or another; however, you should thoughtfully weigh your decision when deciding whether to pursue a high school diploma or GED.