AB 181

Under AB 181, school districts must exempt eligible students from additional requirements and coursework adopted by those individual districts that are beyond the California Education Code's requirements. This means that a special education student may still earn a state diploma from their high school, even if their high school diploma's requirements are more extensive.

Additionally, a student on the alternate curriculum track is able to work towards earning a diploma; the student would then have until the age of 22 to earn their diploma and special education eligibility would not end until the age of 22 or when they earn their diploma.

Your child may qualify for a diploma under this new law.

Also, a special education student may participate in independent study, as long as it is in their IEP. A student shall not be denied independent study even if they are unable to work independently, need adult support, or need special education or related services.

Frank D. Lanterman Regional Center

Lanterman Law Clinic - Adulthood Transition

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Contact your Service Coordinator for More Information about the Adulthood Transition process

Difference between Certificate of Completion and Diploma

FRANK D. LANTERMAN REGIONAL CENTER

General Differences

A diploma may provide for additional post-secondary options for career and education that may not otherwise be available through a certificate of completion. It is important to understand and advocate for the best path for the student as early as possible.

Comparison

General Education: The result of general education is earning a high school diploma. The purpose of a high school diploma is to enable students to pursue a career that requires a diploma or further education that requires a diploma. To earn a diploma, a student must complete a prescribed course of study which includes minimum requirements in various subjects and must earn passing grades in A-G courses. Generally, a student is enrolled until the age of majority (age 18).

Alternate Curriculum: The result of alternate curriculum is earning a certificate of completion. The purpose of alternate curriculum is to focus on functional based learning or community based instruction. No completion of A-G courses is required to earn a certificate of completion. Generally, a student will be enrolled until the age of 22.

5th/6th Year Senior

It is possible to have additional time as a senior to gain the necessary credits to graduate with a diploma. Parents or advocates can request the additional year(s) during an IEP meeting.

A certificate of completion and a diploma do not hold the same weight.

Implications of Curriculum

Whichever curriculum path a student is on can affect the rest of their lives. A diploma is needed for most four-year universities, careers, military enlistment, and sometimes even community colleges. A diploma enables a student to pursue a wider variety of career and education paths; however, a diploma may not be the right choice for students with more severe affects, who require more practical knowledge to be able to live independently outside of school, or who have no interest in a career or path that requires a diploma. Earning a diploma also ends special education eligibility.

A certificate of completion may limit post-secondary opportunities in career and education, but not all career paths require a diploma. This pathway may allow students to focus on vocational classes. A certificate of completion also allows the student extra time in the district and extends their special education eligibility until the age of 22.