

WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION?

Students strive to earn a high school **diploma** because it signifies a student has completed his/her high school career, taken and passed required courses, mastered the required academic standards, met other graduation requirements, and will be taking their place in the adult world by working or continuing their education and training. As desirable as the diploma is, some students find the diploma an unrealistic goal and will conclude their high school career with a **Certificate of Completion**.

A **Certificate of Completion** is not an academic credential and there are no state course or grade requirements necessary to earn a certificate of completion. A student successfully working toward his/her IEP goals is generally eligible to receive a Certificate of Completion.

The decision of whether a student is working toward a diploma or a **Certificate of Completion** should be made by the case conference committee held the year before a student enters high school. Students are often encouraged to attempt to earn a diploma and, if that turns out to be unreasonable, then to reconvene the case conference committee and specify the student will be working to earn a Certificate of Completion.

Question- What good is a Certificate of Completion?

Answer- Students exiting high school with a Certificate of Completion are eligible to participate in any graduation ceremonies the school may sponsor...and this is often very important to students and their families. A Certificate of Completion provides honor and dignity to a student exiting high school. It is a concrete symbol of entry into the adult world.

Question- Does a Certificate of Completion look like a diploma?

Answer- Most schools design their Certificates of Completion to resemble a diploma.

Question- Will I be embarrassed by receiving a Certificate of Completion at the graduation ceremony?

Answer- Graduation ceremonies are intended to be celebrations and no one should be embarrassed for any reason. Most schools structure their graduation ceremonies so that all participating students wear the same cap and gown, are listed alphabetically in the program, march in the procession and are seated alphabetically. Also, many schools give students a blank binder at the ceremony and mail the diplomas and Certificates to students after the ceremony.

Question- If I receive a Certificate of Completion can I ever return to high school?

Answer- Students who receive a Certificate of Completion may decide to return to high school and can do so through the age of 21. There are 2 events that end the school's responsibility to a student with a disability. One of these is earning and receiving a diploma and the other is turning age 22. A student less than age 22 who earlier decided to exit school with a Certificate of Completion can change their mind and return to school until their 22nd birthday or until they earn a diploma, whichever occurs first.

Question- What if I'm on a program to earn a diploma, but learn late in my senior year that I will not be eligible to graduate with a diploma at the end of my senior year?

Answer- Schools have different policies for these situations. Some schools will allow students who are short only a few requirements to participate in graduation ceremonies with their peers. These students are then expected to complete the graduation requirements and receive their diploma at a later time. If a student is on a diploma track but it appears the student will be unable to earn a diploma, the case conference committee should be reconvened. The case conference committee may decide to change from a diploma track to a Certificate of Completion track so the student can exit and be eligible to participate in graduation ceremonies.