



Colorado

Summary of State Firearms Law

Last Updated March 13, 2012

Overview

In its 2010 publication [Gun Laws Matter: A Comparison of State Firearms Laws and Statistics](#), LCAV ranked each state based on a review of state laws in 25 different firearm-related policy areas. Colorado ranked 27th out of 50 – having enacted few gun violence prevention laws. Among other things, Colorado:

- Regulates [gun shows](#) and requires that all firearms transfers at gun shows be processed by a licensed firearms dealer prior to the transfer of any firearm;
- Conducts its own [background checks](#) on firearm purchasers and denies a firearm sale if the background check cannot be completed within the three-day default period; and
- Requires that mentally ill individuals who are ineligible to possess firearms be [reported to the federal database](#) used for firearm purchaser background checks.

Colorado does **not**, however:

- Require a background check prior to [the transfer of a firearm between private parties](#), except at gun shows;
- Prohibit the transfer or possession of [assault weapons](#), [50 caliber rifles](#), or [large capacity ammunition magazines](#);
- Require firearm dealers to obtain a [state license](#);
- Require firearm owners to [obtain a license](#), [register their firearms](#), or [report lost or stolen firearms](#);
- Impose a [waiting period](#) on firearm purchases;
- Limit the [number of firearms](#) that may be purchased at one time;
- Regulate [unsafe handguns](#);
- Significantly [regulate ammunition sales](#); or
- Give law enforcement discretion to deny [a concealed handgun permit](#).

Local governments in Colorado, with the exception of Denver, generally [lack authority](#) to regulate firearms or ammunition.

Colorado Statistics

Gun Deaths

In 2009, Colorado ranked 21st in the number gun deaths per capita among the states. 583 people died from firearms injuries in Colorado in that year.¹

Crime Guns

Mayors Against Illegal Guns recently developed web pages detailing [data about each state's crime gun imports and exports](#). In 2009, [Colorado](#) exported crime guns at almost twice the rate at which it imported them – in other words, guns that had been originally purchased in Colorado were recovered after being used in crimes in other states at twice the rate at which crime guns originally purchased outside Colorado were recovered inside Colorado.²

Number of Federally Licensed Firearms Dealers

There are 1,322 federally licensed firearms dealers and pawnbrokers in Colorado.³

¹ National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *WISQARS Fatal Injury Reports, 1999-2009, for National, Regional, and States (RESTRICTED)*, at http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/dataRestriction_inj.html. (Jan. 2012).

² For a more comprehensive discussion regarding the patterns of gun trafficking across the states, see Mayors Against Illegal Guns, *Trace the Guns: The Link Between Gun Laws and Interstate Gun Trafficking* (September 2010), at <http://www.tracetheguns.org/report.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, *List of Federal Firearms Licensees* (January 2012), at <http://www.atf.gov/about/foia/ffl-list.html>.

Colorado “Right to Bear Arms”

Colorado’s constitution provides for the keeping and bearing of arms, but permits gun regulation for public health and safety purposes. See [LCAV’s State Right to Bear Arms Provisions](#) for more-detailed information.

Local Authority to Regulate Firearms in Colorado

Colorado has preempted most areas of local firearms regulation, but does allow some local gun laws. Denver in particular has special municipal authority to adopt broader gun regulations than most cities, but its authority does not supersede state authority. See [LCAV's State Preemption/Local Authority to Regulate Firearms summary](#) for further information.

State Firearms Policies in Colorado

Please note that many firearm-related laws have exceptions for military and law enforcement personnel.

Persons Prohibited from Firearm Possession

Colorado Prohibited Purchasers Generally

See [Regulating Guns in America: Prohibited Purchasers](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

[Federal law prohibits certain persons from purchasing or possessing firearms](#), such as felons, certain domestic abusers, and certain people with a history of mental illness.

Colorado prohibits any person from possessing a firearm if:

- The transfer would violate federal law;
- The transfer would violate Colorado law;
- The transferee has been arrested for or charged with a crime that would prohibit him or her from purchasing, receiving or possessing a firearm under state or federal law, and there has been no final disposition of the case or the final disposition has not been noted in the databases searched by Colorado Bureau of Investigation during a firearm transferee's background check; or
- The transferee is the subject of an indictment, information or a felony complaint alleging that the prospective transferee has committed a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year as defined by federal law.⁴

Colorado prohibits any person from knowingly possessing, using, or carrying upon his or her person a firearm subsequent to:

- The person's conviction for a felony, or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a felony, under Colorado or any other state's law or under federal law; or
- The person's adjudication for an act which, if committed by an adult, would constitute a felony, or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a felony, under Colorado or any other state's law or under federal law.⁵

Colorado authorizes courts to issue orders prohibiting defendants from possessing guns in cases where a defendant is charged with (but not yet convicted of) a domestic violence misdemeanor.⁶

⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(3)(a), (b).

⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.

⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-1-1001(3)(c).

Firearms transfers by private sellers (non-firearms dealers) are not subject to background checks in Colorado, except when a firearm is transferred at a gun show. See the [Colorado Private Sales](#) and [Colorado Gun Shows](#) sections.

For information on the background check process used to enforce these provisions, see the [Colorado Background Checks](#) section.

Colorado Minimum Age to Purchase or Possess Firearms

In Colorado, any person under age 18 may not knowingly possess a handgun, except:

- When in attendance at a hunter's or firearms safety course;
- During lawful firearm or target shooting;
- During certain organized competitions or performances;
- When hunting or trapping with a valid state license;
- When traveling to or from such activities as previously noted;
- When on property under the control of the person's parent, legal guardian or grandparent with the permission of such person's parent, legal guardian or grandparent; or
- When at the person's residence, with the permission of the person's parent or legal guardian, for the purpose of lawful self-defense.⁷

Colorado does not provide a minimum age to possess rifles or shotguns. Colorado also provides no minimum age for the purchase of a handgun or a long gun, although [federal age restrictions](#) still apply.

For additional age-related restrictions, see the [Colorado Child Access Prevention](#) section.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Minimum Age to Purchase / Possess Firearms](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.5(1), (2).

Domestic Violence and Firearms in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado does not:

- Prohibit persons convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from purchasing or possessing firearms or ammunition, although [federal law applies](#);
- Prohibit abusers who are subject to domestic violence protective orders from purchasing or possessing firearms or ammunition, although [federal law applies](#);
- Explicitly authorize or require the surrender of firearms when a domestic violence protective order is issued; or
- Explicitly authorize or require the removal of firearms or ammunition at the scene of a domestic violence incident.

However, when an inmate is released from prison or other custody of the Colorado Department of Corrections following a conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, the Department is required to submit a written statement to the inmate notifying him or her that it is a crime if he or she possesses or uses a firearm.⁸

Colorado also authorizes (but does not require) courts to issue orders prohibiting defendants from possessing firearms in cases where the defendant is charged with (but not yet convicted of) a domestic violence misdemeanor.⁹

See [Regulating Guns in America: Domestic Violence and Firearms](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108(6)(c)(I).

⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-1-1001(3)(c).

Disarming Prohibited Persons in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado has no law requiring the removal of firearms from [persons who have become prohibited from possessing them](#). However, Colorado law provides that, upon the discharge of any inmate from the custody of the Colorado Department of Corrections, the Department must provide a written advisement to the inmate that it is a crime if the person knowingly possesses, uses, or carries upon his or her person a firearm subsequent to the person's conviction for a felony, or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a felony, or a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence as defined under federal law, or an attempt or conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence. Any written stipulation for a deferred judgment and sentence must contain the same written advisement.¹⁰

¹⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.

Sales & Transfers

Background Checks in Colorado

See [Regulating Guns in America: Background Checks](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

[Federal law requires federally licensed firearms dealers \(but not private sellers\) to initiate a background check on the purchaser prior to sale of a firearm.](#) Federal law provides states with the option of serving as a state “point of contact” and conducting their own background checks using state, as well as federal, records and databases, or having the checks performed by the FBI using only the federal [National Instant Criminal Background Check System \(“NICS”\) database](#). (Note that state files are not always included in the federal database.)

Colorado is a point of contact state for firearm purchaser background checks.¹¹ In Colorado, all firearms transfers by licensed dealers are processed by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (“CBI”) which enforces the federal purchaser prohibitions referenced above.¹²

Colorado law requires CBI to transmit a request for a background check in connection with the prospective transfer of a firearm to the NICS system and authorizes CBI to search other databases. CBI must deny a transfer of a firearm to a prospective transferee if the transfer would violate federal or state law.¹³

Colorado denies a prospective firearm purchaser’s application if the background check cannot be completed within the three-day default period. More specifically, Colorado law provides that an application for a firearm purchase must be denied in cases in which there has been no final disposition or the final disposition is not noted in the NICS or state databases, where the applicant: 1) has been arrested for or charged with a crime that would prohibit him or her from purchasing, receiving or possessing a firearm under state or federal law; or 2) is the subject of an indictment, an information, or a felony complaint alleging that the prospective transferee has committed a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year.¹⁴ However, “the inability of the bureau to obtain the final disposition of a case that is no longer pending shall not constitute the basis for the continued denial of the transfer.”¹⁵

¹¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(2). Federal Bureau of Investigation, *National Instant Criminal Background Check System Participation Map*, at <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/nics/general-information/participation-map>.

¹² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(2).

¹³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(3)(a).

¹⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(3)(b). In 2010, Colorado repealed a provision that would have caused Colorado to cease acting as a point of contact state. 2010 Colo. ALS 363.

¹⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(5)(c). In 2010, Colorado repealed a provision that required the transferee in such cases to provide a letter signed and verified by the clerk of the court or his or her designee indicating that no final case disposition information is available. 2010 Colo. ALS 370 § 1.

Colorado law explicitly provides access to juvenile delinquency court and probation records for firearm background check purposes.¹⁶ Colorado law also provides procedures for appeal of a denial of a firearm transfer.¹⁷

CBI must adopt rules to carry out these duties.¹⁸

Colorado does not require private sellers (sellers who are not licensed dealers) to initiate a background check when transferring a firearm. See [Regulating Guns in America: Private Sales](#).

¹⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 19-1-304(1)(a)(VII.5), (c)(II.5), (2)(a)(II.5).

¹⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(5).

¹⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(7). See 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1507-20.

Mental Health Reporting in Colorado

See [Regulating Guns in America: Mental Health Reporting](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Federal law prohibits possession of a firearm or ammunition by any person who has been “adjudicated as a mental defective” or involuntarily “committed to any mental institution.”¹⁹ No federal law, however, requires states to report the identities of these individuals to the [National Instant Criminal Background Check System \(“NICS”\) database](#), which the FBI uses to perform background checks prior to firearm transfers.

Colorado requires that certain mental health and substance abuse records be reported by all state judicial districts and probate courts to the FBI for inclusion in the NICS database. In Colorado, court clerks are required to report periodically to NICS the name of each person determined by the court to be: 1) incapacitated by court order; 2) committed to the custody of the Colorado Department of Human Services that administers behavioral health programs including those related to mental health and substance abuse; 3) ordered for involuntary certification for short-term treatment of mental illness; 4) ordered for extended certification for treatment of mental illness; or 5) ordered for long-term care and treatment for mental illness.²⁰

Colorado specifically authorizes the obtaining, accessing, use or disclosure of relevant medical records or medical information for firearm purchaser background checks purposes by the Colorado Bureau of Investigation, the clerk of the court of any judicial district, the clerk of the probate court of the city and county of Denver, or by any of their employees, as well as accessing such records and information through the NICS system.²¹

For general information on the background check process and categories of prohibited purchasers or possessors, see the [Colorado Background Checks](#) section and the section entitled [Colorado Prohibited Purchasers Generally](#).

¹⁹ [18 U.S.C. § 922\(d\)\(4\)](#).

²⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-5-142, 13-9-123.

²¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-4-412(4).

Multiple Purchases / Sales of Firearms in Colorado

Colorado has no law restricting sales or purchases of multiple firearms.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Restrictions on Multiple Purchases or Sales of Firearms](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Retention of Sales / Background Check Records in Colorado

Any person or entity engaged in the retail sale of firearms is required to record each handgun transfer, including the purchaser's or transferee's name, age, occupation and address; the make, caliber, finish, and serial number of the handgun; and the date and the name of the transferring employee.²² These records must be available for inspection by law enforcement "at all times."²³ The time period for retention of these records is unspecified.

An administrative regulation of the Colorado Bureau of Identification provides that any information pertaining to an approved individual which is collected or created pursuant to a background check for a firearm transfer must be destroyed within 24 hours of the issuance of the approval. The Bureau must maintain the transaction number, the date and time of its issuance, and the firearms dealer to whom it was relayed.²⁴

See [Regulating Guns in America: Retention of Firearm Sales and Background Check Records](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

²² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26-102.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ 8 Colo. Code Regs. § 1507-20.

Colorado Waiting Periods

Colorado does not impose a specific waiting period between the completion of a firearm purchase and the actual transfer of the firearm to the purchaser. See the [Colorado Background Checks](#) section for information about the process when a background check cannot be completed.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Waiting Periods](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Gun Dealers & Other Sellers

Colorado Dealer Regulations

See [Regulating Guns in America: Dealer Regulations](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

[Federal law requires firearms dealers to obtain a license](#) from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), although resource limitations prevent the ATF from properly overseeing all its licensees.

Colorado does not license or significantly regulate firearms dealers.

Federally licensed dealers are required to post a sign that states Colorado's prohibition on knowingly purchasing or obtaining a firearm on behalf of, or for transfer to, another person the purchaser knows or reasonably should know is ineligible to possess a firearm.²⁵ The dealer must post the sign in an easily readable manner, in an area that is visible to the public at each location from which the dealer sells firearms.²⁶

For laws:

- Applicable to both licensed and private firearm sellers, please see the [Colorado Private Sales](#) section;
- Requiring firearm dealers to conduct a background check on purchasers, see the [Colorado Background Checks](#) section;
- Requiring firearm dealers to keep records of, or report firearm sales, see the [Colorado Retention of Sales / Background Checks Records](#) section; and
- Requiring firearm dealers to ensure that purchasers possess a locking device, see the [Colorado Locking Devices](#) section.

²⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-111(2).

²⁶ *Id.*

Private Sales in Colorado

Firearm transfers between unlicensed persons must be processed by a licensed firearms dealer (subjecting the prospective purchaser to a background check) if the transfer occurs at a gun show. See the [Colorado Gun Shows](#) section. Otherwise, private firearms transfers (*i.e.*, transfers by non-firearms dealers) are **not** subject to a background check requirement in Colorado.

However, in Colorado, a person is criminally liable if he or she:

- Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly provides a handgun to any person under age 18;
- Knows of a juvenile's unlawful possession of a handgun and fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the juvenile's conduct;
- Is aware of a substantial risk that a juvenile will use a handgun to commit a felony and permits the juvenile to possess a handgun;
- Is aware of a substantial risk that a juvenile will use a handgun to commit a felony and fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the commission of the offense; or
- Sells, rents, or transfers ownership of a long gun to a juvenile without the consent of his or her parent or guardian. This prohibition also applies to a person who allows unsupervised possession of a long gun to a juvenile without the consent of the juvenile's parent or guardian.²⁷

See [Regulating Guns in America: Private Sales](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

²⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.7.

Colorado Gun Shows

In 2000, Coloradans voted in favor of a ballot initiative to require background checks at gun shows. As a result, all firearms transfers at gun shows must be processed by a licensed firearms dealer.²⁸ Prospective purchasers are subject to the same background check process that applies to retail firearms transfers and processing dealers must record the transfer and retain the records in the same manner as with retail transfers (see the [Colorado Background Checks](#) and [Dealer Regulations](#) sections).²⁹

Firearms dealers may charge a fee of up to \$10 for conducting the background check, and gun show promoters must prominently post a notice setting forth the requirement for a background check.³⁰ These provisions do not apply to the transfer of antique firearms or curios or relics, as defined under federal law.³¹

Colorado law defines a gun show as:

[T]he entire premises provided for an event or function, including but not limited to parking areas for the event or function, that is sponsored to facilitate, in whole or in part, the purchase, sale, offer for sale, or collection of firearms at which: (a) twenty-five or more firearms are offered or exhibited for sale, transfer, or exchange; or (b) not less than three gun show vendors exhibit, sell, offer for sale, transfer, or exchange firearms.³²

See the [Colorado Private Sales](#) section for state laws that apply at gun shows.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Gun Shows](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

²⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26.1-101(1).

²⁹ *Id.*, Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26.1-102.

³⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 12-26.1-103, 12-26.1-104.

³¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26.1-105.

³² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26.1-106.

Colorado Immunity Statutes

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado law provides that:

A person or other public or private entity may not bring an action in tort, other than a product liability action, against a firearms or ammunition manufacturer, importer, or dealer for any remedy arising from physical or emotional injury, physical damage, or death caused by the discharge of a firearm or ammunition.³³

Product liability actions for injury, damage, or death caused by the discharge of a firearm or ammunition may be based only upon "an actual defect in the design or manufacture of such firearm or ammunition and not upon the inherent potential of a firearm or ammunition to cause injury, damage, or death when discharged."³⁴

Colorado prohibits a firearms or ammunition manufacturer, importer, or dealer from being held liable as a third party "for the actions of another person." Plaintiffs are liable for attorney fees in suits dismissed under the law.³⁵

Colorado permits actions against a firearm or ammunition manufacturer, importer, or dealer for any damages proximately caused by an act of the manufacturer, importer, or dealer in violation of a state or federal statute or regulation.³⁶ In any such action, the plaintiff has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant violated the state or federal statute or regulation.³⁷

Colorado also provides rules regarding proximate cause relevant to product liability actions involving firearms or ammunition:

(1) In a product liability action, the actual discharge of a firearm or ammunition shall be the proximate cause of injury, damage, or death resulting from the use of such product and not the inherent capability of the product to cause injury, damage, or death.

(2) The manufacturer's, importer's, or distributor's placement of a firearm or ammunition in the stream of commerce, even if such placement is found to be foreseeable, shall not be conduct deemed sufficient to constitute the proximate cause of injury, damage, or death resulting from a third party's use of the product.

(3) In a product liability action concerning the accidental discharge of a firearm, the manufacturer's, importer's, or distributor's placement of the product in the stream of commerce shall not be conduct deemed sufficient to

³³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-504.5(1).

³⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-501.

³⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-504.5(2), (3).

³⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-504.5(4).

³⁷ *Id.*

constitute proximate cause, even if accidental discharge is found to be foreseeable.

(4) In addition to any limitation of an action set forth in section 13-80-119, in a product liability action brought by the criminal, it shall be an absolute defense that the injury, damage, or death immediately resulted from the use of the firearm or ammunition during the commission of the criminal act which is a felony or a class 1 or class 2 misdemeanor.³⁸

Nothing contained in the product liability provisions for guns or ammunition will bar recovery where a plaintiff proves that the proximate cause of the injury, damage or death was a firearm or ammunition which contained a defect in manufacture causing it to be at variance from its design, or which was designed so that it did not function in the manner reasonably expected by an ordinary consumer of such a product.³⁹

Finally, Colorado law limits lawsuits against shooting ranges based on noise emanating from the range.⁴⁰

For detailed information about government and private party lawsuits against the gun industry, the status of litigation involving gun industry immunity statutes in various states, or pending gun industry immunity legislation, visit the [Brady Center's Legal Action Project](#) and the [Coalition to Stop Gun Violence's Gun Industry Immunity page](#).

See [LCAV's policy page on Immunity Statutes / Manufacturer Litigation](#) for further information.

³⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-504.

³⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-21-505.

⁴⁰ See Colo. Rev. Stat. § 25-12-109(3).

Gun Owner Responsibilities

Licensing of Gun Owners or Purchasers in Colorado

Colorado has no law requiring gun owners or purchasers to obtain a license.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Licensing of Gun Owners or Purchasers](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Colorado Registration of Firearms

Colorado does not require firearms to be registered. Colorado prohibits a local government, including a law enforcement agency, from maintaining a list or other form of record or database of:

- (a) Persons who purchase or exchange firearms or who leave firearms for repair or sale on consignment;
- (b) Persons who transfer firearms, unless the persons are federally licensed firearms dealers;
- (c) The descriptions, including serial numbers, of firearms purchased, transferred, exchanged, or left for repair or sale on consignment.⁴¹

See [Regulating Guns in America: Registration of Firearms](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

⁴¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 29-11.7-102(1).

Reporting Lost or Stolen Firearms in Colorado

Colorado has no law requiring firearm owners to report the loss or theft of a firearm.

See [*Regulating Guns in America: Reporting Lost or Stolen Firearms*](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Firearms in Public Places

Concealed Weapons Permitting in Colorado

See [Regulating Guns in America: Carrying Concealed Weapons](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Colorado does not prohibit a person from carrying a concealed handgun in public if the person has a permit.⁴²

Colorado is a “shall issue” state, meaning that a sheriff must issue a permit to carry a concealed handgun if an applicant meets certain qualifications.⁴³ Colorado provides sheriffs some discretion in issuing or denying such licenses, however. Even if an applicant meets the criteria to obtain a “shall issue” permit (listed below), the sheriff may deny the permit if the sheriff has a reasonable belief that documented behavior by the applicant makes it likely the applicant will present a danger to himself, herself or others if the applicant receives a permit.⁴⁴

The sheriff shall issue a permit to an applicant who:

- Is a legal resident of the state of Colorado;
- Is age 21 or older;
- Is not ineligible to possess a firearm pursuant state⁴⁵ or federal law;
- Has not been convicted of perjury under state law, in relation to information provided or deliberately omitted on a concealed handgun permit application;
- Does not chronically and habitually use alcoholic beverages to the extent that the applicant’s normal faculties are impaired;⁴⁶
- Is not an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance as defined under state law;
- Is not subject to a: 1) protection order issued under state law⁴⁷ and in effect at the time the application is submitted; 2) permanent protection order issued pursuant to

⁴² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-214.

⁴³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-203(1).

⁴⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-203(2), (3).

⁴⁵ See Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108 for state weapons prohibitions by criminal offenders.

⁴⁶ This prohibition does not apply to an applicant who provides an affidavit, signed by a professional counselor or addiction counselor licensed under state law and specializing in alcohol addiction, stating that the applicant has been evaluated by the counselor and has been determined to be a recovering alcoholic who has refrained from using alcohol for at least three years. Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-203(1)(e)(II).

⁴⁷ See Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-1-1001 or § 19-2-707 for protection order provisions.

state law; or 3) temporary protection order issued pursuant to state law that is in effect at the time the application is submitted;⁴⁸ and

- Demonstrates competence with a handgun by one of several statutorily-authorized methods (for details, see the Firearm Safety Training subsection below).⁴⁹

A sheriff may also issue a “temporary emergency permit to carry a concealed handgun” to an individual whom the sheriff has reason to believe may be in immediate danger.⁵⁰ The criteria to obtain the permit are similar to those of the non-emergency permit, except that no evidence of competence with a handgun is required and the applicant need only be age 18 or older.⁵¹ The emergency permit is valid for 90 days from the date of issuance and may be renewed only once. However, if the permittee is less than 21 years of age, the sheriff can renew the permit until the permittee reaches 21 years of age.⁵²

Firearm Safety Training

Applicants for a Colorado permit to carry a concealed handgun must demonstrate competence with a handgun by submitting evidence of completion of one of the following:

- Evidence of experience with a firearm through participation in organized shooting competitions or current military service;
- Evidence that, at the time the application is submitted, the applicant is a certified instructor;⁵³
- Proof of honorable discharge from a branch of the U.S. armed forces within the three years preceding submittal of the application;
- Proof of honorable discharge from a branch of the U.S. armed forces that reflects pistol qualifications obtained within the 10 years preceding submittal of the application;
- A certificate showing retirement from a Colorado law enforcement agency that reflects pistol qualifications obtained within the 10 years preceding submittal of the application; or

⁴⁸ See Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-14-101 – 13-14-104 for information on permanent and temporary civil protection orders.

⁴⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-203(1).

⁵⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-209.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.*, Additional application and background check requirements, as well as permit suspension and disqualification information, are detailed under Colo. Rev. Stat. §§ 18-12-203(3)(a), 18-12-205.

⁵³ “Certified instructor” means an instructor for a firearms safety course who is certified as a firearms instructor by:

- A county, municipal, state, or federal law enforcement agency;
- The peace officers standards and training board;
- A federal military agency; or
- A national nonprofit organization that certifies firearms instructors, operates national firearms competitions, and provides training, including courses in personal protection, in small arms safety, use, and marksmanship.

Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-202(2).

- A training certificate from a handgun training class obtained within the 10 years preceding submittal of the application. The applicant shall submit the original training certificate or a photocopy thereof that includes the original signature of the class instructor. In obtaining a training certificate from a handgun training class, the applicant shall have discretion in selecting which handgun training class to complete.⁵⁴

“Handgun training class” means:

- A law enforcement training firearms safety course;
- A firearms safety course offered by a law enforcement agency, an institution of higher education, or a public or private institution or organization or firearms training school, that is open to the general public and is taught by a certified instructor; or
- A firearms safety course or class that is offered and taught by a certified instructor.⁵⁵

Duration & Renewal

A Colorado permit to carry a concealed handgun is valid for five years.⁵⁶ To renew a permit, the permittee must submit an application which requires the same information required for the original permit, including fingerprints.⁵⁷ After six months from its expiration date, a permit is considered permanently expired and cannot be renewed. Persons whose permits are permanently expired must reapply for a permit.⁵⁸

Disclosure or Use of Information

Local sheriffs in Colorado must keep a list of persons to whom permits have been issued and may share the information with law enforcement for the purpose of determining the validity of a permit.⁵⁹ On or after July 1, 2011, a sheriff can no longer share information from the list of permittees with other law enforcement for the purpose of creating a statewide database of permittees, and any law enforcement agency that receives information concerning permittees from a sheriff shall not use the information to create or maintain a database of permittees.⁶⁰ Any information concerning a permittee that is included in a statewide database must be removed from the database no later than July 1, 2011.⁶¹ The Colorado Bureau of Investigation may only use an applicant’s fingerprints to obtain information for sheriffs for the purpose of granting or revoking a permit.⁶²

⁵⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-203(1)(h).

⁵⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-202(5).

⁵⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-204(1)(b).

⁵⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-211.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-206(3)(a).

⁶⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-206(3)(b).

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-208(2).

Reciprocity

A permit to carry a concealed handgun issued in a state that recognizes Colorado concealed handgun permits is valid in Colorado if the permit is issued to a person age 21 or older who is either: 1) a resident of the state that issued the permit; or 2) a resident of Colorado for no more than 90 days.⁶³

⁶³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-213.

Open Carrying in Colorado

Colorado does not prohibit the [open carrying of handguns or long guns in public](#), and no permit or license is required.

Local governments may enact regulations prohibiting open carrying of firearms in a building or specific area within the local government's jurisdiction, as long as signs are posted to that effect.⁶⁴

For a comprehensive discussion of this issue, see [LCAV's policy page on the Open Carrying of Firearms in Public](#).

⁶⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 29-11.7-104.

Location Restrictions

Guns in Vehicles in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

In Colorado, a person may carry a concealed firearm, regardless of a permit, while in a private automobile or other private conveyance, for lawful protection while traveling.⁶⁵ Colorado law provides that local governments may not restrict a person's ability to travel in a private automobile or other private conveyance while in possession of a firearm for hunting or lawful protection while traveling.⁶⁶

Colorado prohibits any person from possessing or having under his or her control any firearm other than a handgun in or on any motor vehicle unless the chamber of the firearm is unloaded.⁶⁷

Subject to limited exceptions, the state prohibits any person from operating or riding on any snowmobile with a firearm in his or her possession, unless the firearm is unloaded and enclosed in a carrying case.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105(2)(b). See also Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-204(3), providing that no permit is required to carry a handgun within a private automobile or other private conveyance if the handgun is carried for a legal use and the possessor is not prohibited from possessing a firearm by law.

⁶⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105.6(2)(b).

⁶⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 33-6-125.

⁶⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 33-14-117(1)(b).

Guns in Schools in Colorado

Colorado prohibits any person from knowingly and unlawfully and without legal authority carrying, bringing, or having in his or her possession a firearm, whether loaded or unloaded,⁶⁹ in or on the property of any public or private elementary, middle, junior high, high or vocational school.⁷⁰

Exceptions to this prohibition include:

- Presenting an authorized public demonstration or exhibition pursuant to instruction in conjunction with an organized school or class;
- Carrying out the necessary duties of an employee of an educational institution that require the use of a deadly weapon;
- Participating in an authorized extracurricular activity or on an athletic team;
- Possession of a firearm in the lawful possessor's dwelling or place of business, or on property owned or under that person's control at the time of possession;
- Possession in a private automobile or other private means of conveyance for protection of that person, another person, or their property while traveling;
- Possession of a handgun pursuant to a valid permit to carry a concealed handgun or a temporary emergency permit, except if the person was carrying a concealed handgun in violation of state law that prohibits possession of a concealed handgun onto the property of a public elementary, middle, junior high or high school; or
- Possession of a firearm for use in an educational program approved by a school that includes, but is not limited to, any course designed for the repair or maintenance of weapons.⁷¹

A concealed handgun permittee may only carry a handgun on the property of a public elementary, middle, junior high or high school if he or she is: 1) on duty as a security guard for the school; 2) within his or her private vehicle (if the permittee is not with the vehicle, the handgun must be within a closed compartment within the locked vehicle); or 3) upon undeveloped property owned by a school district used for hunting or shooting sports.⁷²

Colorado provides mandatory expulsion from public school by any student who carries, brings, uses or possesses a firearm, whether loaded or unloaded, without the authorization of the school or the school district.⁷³ Carrying, bringing or possessing a firearm without the authorization of the school or the school district does not require mandatory expulsion if, when the student discovers that he or she has carried, brought, or is in possession of the firearm, he or she notifies a teacher, administrator, or other authorized person in the school

⁶⁹ As defined under Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-1-901(3)(e).

⁷⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105.5(1).

⁷¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105.5(1), (3).

⁷² Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-214(3).

⁷³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-33-106(1)(d)(I), (II).

district as soon as possible and delivers the firearm to the teacher, administrator or other authorized person.⁷⁴

Colleges and Universities

Colorado prohibits any person from knowingly and unlawfully and without legal authority carrying, bringing, or having in his or her possession a firearm, whether loaded or unloaded,⁷⁵ in or on the property of any public or private college, university or seminary.⁷⁶

Exceptions to this prohibition include:

- Presenting an authorized public demonstration or exhibition pursuant to instruction in conjunction with an organized school or class;
- Carrying out the necessary duties of an employee of an educational institution that require the use of a deadly weapon;
- Participating in an authorized extracurricular activity or on an athletic team;
- Possession of an unloaded firearm while remaining inside of a motor vehicle upon the property of any public or private college, university or seminary;
- Possession of a firearm in the lawful possessor's dwelling or place of business, or on property owned or under that person's control at the time of possession;
- Possession in a private automobile or other private means of conveyance for protection of that person, another person, or their property while traveling;
- Possession of a handgun pursuant to a valid permit to carry a concealed handgun or a temporary emergency permit; or
- Possession of a firearm for use in an educational program approved by a school that includes, but shall not be limited to, any course designed for the repair or maintenance of weapons.⁷⁷

See [LCAV's policy page on Guns in Schools](#) for further information.

⁷⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-33-106(1)(d)(III).

⁷⁵ As defined under Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-1-901(3)(e).

⁷⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105.5(1).

⁷⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105.5(1), (3).

Other Location Restrictions in Colorado

Except for concealed carry permit holders, no person may possess a firearm in a building in Colorado in which the chambers, galleries, or offices of the state general assembly or any member, officer, or employee of the general assembly are located, or in which a legislative hearing or meeting is taking place.⁷⁸

Local governments may enact regulations prohibiting open carrying of firearms in a building or specific area within the local government's jurisdiction, as long as signs are posted to that effect.⁷⁹

No person, regardless of a permit to carry a concealed handgun, may carry a concealed handgun into a public building at which security personnel and electronic screening devices are permanently in place at each entrance, each person entering the building is screened, and persons carrying weapons are required to leave them with security while in the building.⁸⁰

Colorado prohibits any person from possessing a loaded firearm in, or carrying or bringing a loaded firearm into, any public transportation facility.⁸¹

A Colorado administrative regulation also prohibits gun possession in parks and outdoor recreation lands throughout the state, although concealed handgun permit holders are exempt.⁸²

Colorado has no statutes prohibiting firearms in the following places, although administrative regulations may apply:

- Hospitals;
- Places of worship;
- Bars or restaurants where alcohol is served;
- Sports arenas;
- Gambling facilities; or
- Polling places.

⁷⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-105(1)(c).

⁷⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 29-11.7-104.

⁸⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-214(4).

⁸¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-9-118.

⁸² See 2 Colo. Code Regs. § 405-1, ch. 1, art. IV(a)(1).

Consumer & Child Safety

Colorado Design Safety Standards for Handguns

Colorado does not specifically regulate junk guns or unsafe firearms.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Design Safety Standards for Handguns](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Locking Devices in Colorado

Colorado law does not require a locking device to accompany the sale of a firearm, although [federal law](#) applies. Colorado also does not require firearm owners to lock their weapons.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Locking Devices](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Personalized / Owner-Authorized Firearms in Colorado

Colorado does not require firearms to be personalized.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Personalized Firearms](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Colorado Child Access Prevention

In Colorado, a person is criminally liable for a felony who:

- Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly provides a handgun to any person under age 18;
- Knows of a juvenile's unlawful possession of a handgun and fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the juvenile's conduct;
- Is aware of a substantial risk that a juvenile will use a handgun to commit a felony and permits the juvenile to possess a handgun; or
- Is aware of a substantial risk that a juvenile will use a handgun to commit a felony and fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the commission of the offense.⁸³

Any person who sells, rents, or transfers ownership of a long gun to a juvenile without the consent of his or her parent or guardian is criminally liable for a misdemeanor.⁸⁴ This provision also prohibits a person from allowing unsupervised possession of a long gun by a juvenile without the consent of his or her parent or guardian.⁸⁵

See [Regulating Guns in America: Child Access Prevention](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

⁸³ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.7(1), (2).

⁸⁴ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-108.7(3).

⁸⁵ *Id.*

Classes of Weapons / Ammunition

Assault Weapons in Colorado

Colorado has no law restricting assault weapons. See [Regulating Guns in America: Assault Weapons](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines in Colorado

Colorado has no law restricting large capacity magazines. See [Regulating Guns in America: Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Fifty Caliber Rifles in Colorado

Colorado has no law restricting fifty caliber rifles. See [Regulating Guns in America: Fifty Caliber Rifles](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Machine Guns/Automatic Firearms in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado prohibits the knowing possession of a “dangerous weapon,” which includes a machine gun.⁸⁶ Limited exceptions exist for peace or military officers when acting in the lawful discharge of their duties, and persons with a valid permit to possess a machine gun.⁸⁷ Federal law generally allows the possession of machine guns manufactured prior to May 19, 1986 so long as they are registered.

See [LCAV’s policy page on Machine Guns](#) for further information.

⁸⁶ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-102(1), (3).

⁸⁷ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-102(5).

Non-Powder Guns in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado provides for mandatory expulsion from public school for carrying, bringing, using or possessing, without proper authorization, a pellet or BB gun, whether operational or not, designed to propel projectiles by spring action or compressed air.⁸⁸ Colorado does not otherwise regulate non-powder guns.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Non-Powder Guns](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

⁸⁸ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-33-106(1)(d)(I), (II)(B).

Ammunition Regulation in Colorado

Colorado does not regulate ammunition in any way.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Ammunition Regulation](#) for a comprehensive discussion of this issue.

Investigating Gun Crimes

Colorado Microstamping/Ballistic Identification

Colorado has no laws regarding firearm microstamping or ballistic identification.

See [Regulating Guns in America: Ballistic Identification](#) and LCAV's policy page on [Firearm Microstamping](#) for comprehensive discussions of these issues.

Firearms Trafficking in Colorado

(This section was last updated October 25, 2010.)

Colorado prohibits any person from knowingly purchasing or otherwise obtaining a firearm on behalf of or for transfer to a person who the transferor knows or reasonably should know is ineligible to possess a firearm pursuant to federal or state law.⁸⁹

Colorado specifically penalizes anyone who gives false information in connection with the making a record of a handgun transfer.⁹⁰ Colorado law also provides that it is unlawful for any person, in connection with the acquisition or attempted acquisition of a firearm from any transferor, to willfully make any false or fictitious oral or written statement or to furnish or exhibit any false, fictitious, or misrepresented identification that is intended or likely to deceive such transferor with respect to any fact material to the lawfulness of the sale or other disposition of such firearm under federal or state law.⁹¹

Colorado has no other laws addressing firearms trafficking.

See [LCAV's policy page on Firearms Trafficking](#) for further information on this topic.

⁸⁹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 18-12-111(1).

⁹⁰ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 12-26-103.

⁹¹ Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-33.5-424(10).

Colorado State Links

[Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Denver Field Division \(CO, MT, UT, WY\)](#)

[University of Colorado Boulder, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence](#)

[Colorado Department of Law / State Attorney General](#)

[Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#)