

# **The Concealed Carry Guide**



**Everything You Need to Know About  
Concealed Carry Permits in the  
United States**



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## About the Author

Jacob S Paulsen is the founder of USA Firearm Training, today's fastest growing firearm instruction company in the United States. As of this writing USA Firearm Training is delivering in-person firearm instruction in 10 US states, teaching thousands of new Americans each year about firearm safety, handling, proficiency, and legal concerns. In addition to in-person training USA Firearm Training also provides online courses and training options to Americans via it's website. Jacob is the author and producer of a proprietary Online Concealed Carry class.

Prior to USA Firearm Training Jacob founded Justice Education Security, a private security business that provided executive protection services to executives, celebrities, and other important assets. Jacob is a certified NRA Instructor, Utah BCI Instructor, licensed private investigator, certified Range Safety Officer, Affiliate Instructor for Next Level Training and L.A.S.R., and a diamond member of Front Sight Firearm Training Institute. Jacob has personally given in person firearm training to over 5,000 students in the last 5 years. Jacob is also the author of several self-defense and firearm related books and is the editor in chief for the USA Firearm Training blog to which he also contributes articles.

More importantly Jacob is a father and a husband. He resides in Colorado with his wife and two young children. Above all else Jacob says he believes in Justice for the unjust, education for the people, and security for the public.

## Introduction

This guide is designed to help you understand the world of concealed carry, legislation, regulation, industry jargon, and the various aspects of obtaining a concealed carry permit. Since much of the laws governing the concealed carry of firearms are state specific this guide will review the general practices and include specific resources that you can use to research your own state laws and regulations.

## What is a Concealed Carry Permit

The first 10 amendments to the US constitution are commonly known as the Bill of Rights. The second of those reads, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." While much debate exists currently over what the original authors intended or how this should be properly interpreted or applied today, current legal precedents interpret this to mean that law abiding citizens have a right to own and carry firearms for hunting, sport, and self-defense.

In the 1800s some states started to ban the concealed carry of firearms. Before that point concealed carry was considered fully legal. As this developed over time the trend began in the middle to late twentieth century when states began to devise regulation around the issuing of concealed carry permits. Today, with few exceptions, states require that a citizen obtain a concealed carry permit in order to carry a concealed firearm out of their home.

Concealed Carry Permits could be compared in some degree to Driver's Licenses in the sense that each state retains the right to determine at what age the permits will be issued and what the applicant must do in order to qualify to receive one. While there is little significant variance between states as it relates to qualifying to obtain a driver's license, there is VERY significant variance between states as it relates to obtaining a concealed carry permit.

Concealed carry permits (CCP) depending on the state are also commonly referred to as concealed handgun permits (CHP), concealed handgun licenses (CHL), concealed carry weapons (CCW) and concealed carry deadly weapons (CCDW).

With significant variance by state, generally a citizen in possession of a valid concealed carry permit may carry a concealed handgun on or about their person outside of the home and the vehicle. Places and areas that are off limits vary by state and local city and county jurisdictions.

## Shall Issue VS May Issue

The term Shall Issue is used in the industry to refer to states that have policies in place that require that law enforcement or the designated governing body, issue permits to applicants who meet the requirements set by the law regardless of any arbitrary bias or discretion the issuing authority may have. While some states give the issuing authority some discretion based on their intimate knowledge of the applicants danger to society; most of these states are still considered Shall Issue states as they are not able to employ any arbitrary discretion.

May Issue states then are those that leave the discretion to the local authority to decide if they will issue the permit to the applicant or not regardless if the applicant has met the legal requirements to apply. The likelihood of obtaining a permit in May Issue states, counties, or local municipalities varies from one to the next and is often influenced by social status or demonstrated “need.” A recent federal court decision in reference to the laws in Washington D.C. may have some bearing on reducing the power of May Issue policies everywhere in the U.S.A.

## Constitutional Carry

Constitutional Carry is the term most often used to describe unrestricted states that allow citizens that meet certain criteria to carry concealed firearms without any permit. The number of these states is relatively low at the time of this writing. Constitutional carry is generally permitted to citizens or occupants of the state when they meet minimum age requirements and are not prohibited from owning a firearm.

Most states that fall into this category still make available a concealed carry permit for residents who may travel and need a permit in order to carry concealed in other states. (See section on reciprocity below)

## Will a Concealed Carry Permit Put You On The Grid

It would be impossible for us to give a clear and detailed analysis on this question speaking generically to all gun owners since states vary in their own concealed carry permit laws and privacy laws. You would do well to consult with a local instructor or local attorney to get complete clarity for your state.

Lets start with the facts.

Fact: Currently there is no NATIONAL firearm purchase database due to federal law. Some local states may require all firearms, or handguns only, be registered with the local authorities. At the time of this writing states that do require firearm registration of some form include: California, D.C., Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands.

Fact: Currently there is no NATIONAL database of concealed carry permit holders. Naturally each state needs to and does maintain a database of concealed carry holders. In many states the county or other issuing authority may maintain a database in addition to or in place of the statewide database. States vary as to if that database of permit holders is public, private, or is made available at some limited degree to public inquiries. Check your local state or the state in which you want to apply to determine if your permit is or would be a matter of public record.



Fact: As part of the process to apply for a concealed carry permit a state and federal background check is generally run. This is submitted by the state to the FBI and checked against the federal fingerprint database.

So, depending on your local state and in consideration of those facts here are some of the more common concerns about obtaining a permit and our response to those concerns.

The most obvious and common concern is that the law could change. It would take only some new and successful legislation for the federal government or your local state government to begin to keep a permit database, make it public, or require firearm registration.

I tend to feel that while some states like Connecticut and New York are making headlines about their new strict gun control oriented laws, in general the country is making a lot of positive headway toward being more gun friendly for law abiding citizens. The winds change rapidly and it is hard to predict what may or what may not happen but I do think that time will show that these unwanted changes will eventually have consequences that even that political camp doesn't want to endure.

I also think that while some of the current hot gun control topics like universal background checks and magazine limitations are generally not popular in the "gun owner" household, there are many gun owners who support these types of measures and try to argue their merit. Changing the laws to create a greater database or registry of gun owners or permit holders would be more strongly opposed by those gun owners who might otherwise justify these other topics.

We have found that even those who strongly support gun control in most forms still believe that a public registry or database of firearm owners or permit holders would be dangerous and unwarranted.

Another potential response to most of these concerns is that if the government truly wanted to create a database of gun owners in order to potentially one day confiscate weapons, most of us who currently own guns or intend on purchasing one someday are likely to be put on that list regardless if we have obtained a permit or not. Very few live a life of gun ownership (inside or outside the law) without eventually getting onto that imaginary/potential "grid."

Lastly, and perhaps the one I feel most strongly about personally, I feel that one of the greatest tools we have both in our own private security and freedoms is education and training. Getting more people educated both informally and formally not only is better for us as firearm owners in terms of our own safety and preparation, it is also critical to send a political message to the other side of the gun control camp. We want people to know that we do believe in training and education and that we are willing to invest in it even if we don't feel it should be required to exercise our 2nd amendment rights in part or in full.

## **A Word About Open Carry**

Open carry is the industry term we use to refer to one's right or legal ability to carry a non-concealed firearm in the open in public. Many gun owners feel that their second amendment rights should not

require that they conceal their firearm at all. Conversations around the practice of concealed carry tend to center around our constitutional rights and not as much around the safety, tactics, and practicality around the subject.

More than half of US states have laws that allow citizens in part to carry open firearms in public. Some states tie this right or privilege to the concealed carry permit and other states address it separately and allow open carry for all qualified citizens regardless of having or not having a permit.

## Reciprocity 101

I have often found that the easiest way to explain concealed carry reciprocity is to try to compare it to a driver's license. You see when you obtain a driver's license from any state in this country you know it is valid in every other state in the country. You perhaps have never thought about it but can you imagine driving into the neighboring state, getting pulled over, and being told by the officer that they don't honor driver's licenses from your state? The federal government regulates it. This is also why you can't have more than one driver's license at the same time.

Concealed carry permits are far different. Recently some federal court decisions have forced all states to allow citizens to carry a concealed firearm legally. Now, while all states must somehow allow citizens to carry concealed weapons, each state varies significantly in their system to issue permits. Because states have such unique processes and qualifications for citizens to obtain permits, states are less likely to feel that they can honor permits from other states.

As an example, in Nevada citizens must take a lengthy class that includes classroom instruction and range time. In Wyoming citizens need only pay a fee and pass a background check. You can see while Nevada would be distrusting of people who have an Wyoming concealed carry permit. In their view, Wyoming permit carriers don't meet the Nevada state qualifications to have a permit.

Therefore, each state has a list of what other state permits they will honor. There are a decent number of states that don't discriminate but the majority of states are selective.

## Reciprocity Patchwork - The Guide for Road Warriors

Reciprocity is further complicated by the fact that you can obtain as many permits as you wish and a number of states will issue permits to out of state residents. So any one given gun owner may have a resident permit from their own state and out of state non-resident permits from other states. Knowing that many gun owners "game" the system some states (like Colorado or Michigan) only honor permits from certain states and even then only when the permit is in the hand of a resident from the state where the permit was issued.

How can you check on what states honor your permit (or combination or permits)? We have an amazing tool on our site we call the [Dynamic Concealed Carry Map Generator](#). Input all your permits and it will give you your current map. Also, at the bottom of that page you can subscribe to get email updates when reciprocity changes.

## Training Requirements

As you have learned by now the laws that control the regulation around concealed carry permits vary dramatically from state to state and training requirements are no exception. A small number of states have no training requirements at all. If you pass the background check and pay the fee you get the permit. On the other end of the extreme some states require as much as 16 hours of training that includes both classroom and live range firing with a handgun in order to qualify to apply for the permit. Most states fall somewhere in the middle. In addition to understanding the minimum guidelines for qualifying to apply you should also consider your own personal training needs. All of us should seek out as much training as possible but you should also consider the following:

- Am I ready for a full training course that will include live fire
- How many other people may be in the course? How big of a group am I comfortable with
- Am I already comfortable with stance, grip, and basic handling or do I need hands on training from a professional

## Application Process

Similarly the application process varies from state to state. Most commonly applications are submitted via county sheriff offices, via the mail to a state office such as the dept. of public safety or state police, or even via a state website. There are almost always application fees and they will always require fingerprints.

## How To Research Your Local State

### Resources for researching local state laws:

[USA Firearm Training State Website List](#): This web page has the direct links to each of the individual state government websites that contain information specific to firearms and concealed carry for that state.

[HandgunLaw.us](#): This web page contains an updated archive of PDF files for each US state that contains an overview of that states firearm laws and concealed carry laws. It is a great and very thorough resource.

[The Traveler's Guide to the Gun Laws of the Fifty States](#): This physical book is a great resource to keep in your car or home. It contains a single "cheat sheet" for each US state and acts as the top industry resource for researching other states laws.



## Resources for finding a local firearm instructor:

We hope that where possible you will consider working with one of our local instructors. We currently provide in person concealed carry training in 15 states.

[View our Local Class Schedules](#)

Via our website firearm related business directory we also provide access to hundreds of firearm instructors across the country:

[View our Firearm Business Directory](#)

## Places That Prohibit Concealed Carry

You should be aware that even with a concealed carry permit there will still be many places you cannot take your firearm. The national, state, and local governments have their own list of prohibited places. In addition to that almost all states allow or recognize the ability for private property owners and businesses to prohibit firearms if they wish. Your local instructor will be able to better inform you on where you cannot take your firearm.

## Other Resources:

[Online CCW](#): You can take our online only concealed carry course and qualify to obtain the Virginia state permit which is honored in 28 states. Click on the link to see if you live in one of the 28 states.

[Training Tracker](#): With a free user account you can log and keep track of all your firearm training. This serves not only to help you improve your skills with the valuable feedback but also to help your attorney prove you are not negligent or reckless should you be involved in a firearm related incident.

[Additional Training](#): Your concealed carry permit required training is just the beginning. Continue on to get as much additional training as you can get. Here are the top online available options.

[Concealed Carry Gear and Store](#): The most comprehensive store of firearm related products such as holsters, books, accessories, and more.