Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms
Comprehensive Guide and Information Packet
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Section 01 – General Information

1.1 Definition

What is a License to Carry Firearms? It is important for you to understand exactly what you’re interested in applying for and how it can be used. In simple language, a License to Carry Firearms (LTCF) is a legal piece of documentation that allows you to carry a weapon in many (but not all) public areas. It is important to realize that the type of weapon permitted varies by state but, in this guide, we will be discussing the laws, regulations and procedures related directly to handguns.

As further insight into the Pennsylvania LTCF, the state has a unique definition of what classifies as a firearm. Here is an excerpt from 18 PA.C.S. § 6102, which serves as Pennsylvania’s official, legal definition of a firearm:

A firearm is: “Any pistol or revolver with a barrel length less than 15 inches, any shotgun with a barrel length less than 18 inches or any rifle with a barrel length less than 16 inches, or any pistol, revolver, rifle or shotgun with an overall length of less than 26 inches. The barrel length of a firearm shall be determined by measuring from the muzzle of the barrel to the face of the closed action, bolt or cylinder, whichever is applicable.”

A License to Carry Firearms in the State of Pennsylvania follows this definition, and is often referred to by other names such as:

- Concealed Carry Permit (CCP)
- Permit to Carry
- Carrying of Concealed Weapon (CCW)
- Concealed Weapons Permit (CWP)
- Gun Permit
- Concealed Handgun License (CHL)
- Handgun License
- Concealed Pistol Permit

Although different terms are used, all are referring to the legal document that authorizes the concealed carry of a handgun in the State of Pennsylvania. In this guide, we may refer to the LTCF as any of the above names.

**Good to Know**

Having a permit to carry a weapon on your person does not authorize you to use that weapon. It is important you know and understand the laws surrounding the use of a firearm or weapon.
1.2 Pennsylvania’s Policies

Pennsylvania does not require firearm registration for handguns, but it is necessary to obtain a Pennsylvania permit before carrying a concealed firearm in the public (outside of your home or permanent place of business) or in your vehicle. In some places, such as Philadelphia, an LTCF may be required to both open carry and to carry concealed.

As stated in 18 Pa.C.S. § 6109, LTCF’s for Pennsylvania residents are processed by the Sheriff’s office of the jurisdiction (most often the county) in which the applicant resides. The basic application form itself is common throughout the state of Pennsylvania and prescribed by the State Police.

Nonresident LTCFs are also processed by a County Sheriff of the State of Pennsylvania, but require that the applicant already possesses a Carry Permit from his or her own state of residence (if their home state grants such permits). Residents of Illinois, Washington D.C. and Vermont cannot obtain home-state carry permits, so they are exempt from this rule.

LTCFs are valid for five years for both residents and non-residents.

It should also be noted that a license to carry firearms does not function as a license to purchase a weapon in the State of Pennsylvania. A background check is required for ALL individuals that purchase a firearm from a licensed dealer, whether they have a carry permit or not.

1.3 Eligibility

Pennsylvania is a “Shall-Issue” State, meaning that the authorities of Pennsylvania are required to grant a handgun license to any applicant that meets the determining criteria. The state does not have legal authority to deny an applicant that is qualified to receive a LTCF, and likewise the applicant is not required to demonstrate “Good Cause”. In other words, if you qualify for a carry permit based upon the published criteria, you should not have any issues obtaining a LTCF in the state of Pennsylvania.

Before proceeding, it is important to determine whether or not you are eligible for a Carry Permit in the state of Pennsylvania. Thankfully, we’ve compiled a list of eligibility requirements. You must meet ALL of the requirements in order to be considered for a LTCF. It is important that you review this list in detail as the licensing fee is non-refundable should you be found ineligible.
Am I Eligible for a LTCF in Pennsylvania?

If you answer “Yes” to any of the following questions, you may not be eligible for a License to Carry Firearms in Pennsylvania.

1. Is your character and reputation such that you would be likely to act in a manner dangerous to public safety?
2. Have you ever been convicted of an offense under the Act of April 14, 1972 (P.L. 233, No. 64) known as the controlled substance, drug, device and cosmetic act?
3. Have you ever been involuntarily committed to a hospital or health care facility for a mental health reason?
4. Have you been adjudicated as incompetent or incapacitated?
5. Are you an alcoholic or a habitual drinker?
6. Are you an unlawful user of marijuana, stimulants or narcotic drugs?
7. Have you ever been charged with a crime that carries a maximum jail sentence of more than one year?
8. Have you ever received a dishonorable discharge from the US Armed Forces?
9. Are you a fugitive from justice?
10. Are you prohibited from possessing or acquiring a firearm under the statutes of the United States?
11. Are you not a citizen of the United States or in the United States illegally?
12. Have you ever been convicted of driving under the influence?
13. Have you ever been adjudicated delinquent for a crime or convicted of a crime from the following list (§ 6105 section b):
   1. § 908 Prohibited offensive weapons
   2. § 911 Corrupt organizations
   3. § 912 Possession of weapon on school property
   4. § 2502 Murder
   5. § 2503 Voluntary manslaughter
   6. § 2504 Involuntary manslaughter, if the offense is based on the reckless use of a firearm
   7. § 2702 Aggravated assault
   8. § 2703 Assault by prisoner
   9. § 2704 Assault by life prisoner
   10. § 2709.1 Stalking
   11. § 2716 Weapons of mass destruction
   12. § 2901 Kidnapping
   13. § 2902 Unlawful restraint
   14. § 2910 Luring a child into a motor vehicle or structure
   15. § 3121 Rape
   16. § 3123 Involuntary deviate sexual intercourse
   17. § 3125 Aggravated indecent assault
   18. § 3301 Arson and related offenses
   19. § 3302 Causing or risking catastrophe
20. § 3502 Burglary
21. § 3503 Criminal trespass, if the offense is graded a felony of the second degree or higher
22. § 3701 Robbery
23. § 3702 Robbery of motor vehicle
24. § 3921 Theft by unlawful taking or disposition, upon conviction of the second felony offense
25. § 3923 Theft by extortion, when the offense is accompanied by threats of violence
26. § 3925 Receiving stolen property, upon conviction of the second felony offense
27. § 4906 False reports to law enforcement authorities, if the fictitious report involved the theft of a firearm as provided in 4906(c)(2)
28. § 4912 Impersonating a public servant if the person is impersonating a law enforcement officer
29. § 4952 Intimidation of witnesses or victims
30. § 4953 Retaliation against witness, victim or party
31. § 5121 Escape
32. § 5122 Weapons or implements for escape
33. § 5501(3) Riot
34. § 5515 Prohibiting of paramilitary training
35. § 5516 Facsimile weapons of mass destruction
36. § 6110.1 Possession of firearm by minor
37. § 6301 Corruption of minors
38. § 6302 Sale or lease of weapons and explosives

So, how did you do? If you answered “No” to all of the above questions, then let’s move on...

Section 02 – The Training and Application Process

Now that you know more about the LTCF is and you’ve determined your eligibility, it helps to have an overview of the application process. Any resident 21 years of age or older may apply in person or in writing to the Sheriff of the county (or city, in the case of Philadelphia) in which he or she resides. There are a few counties that may require that you visit the Sheriff’s Office in person to turn in your application, so it is important to review the information in subsequent sections to see if this would apply in your area.

In most counties, there is no requirement as to the length of time an applicant for a License to Carry Firearms must have been a resident or domiciliary of the county or city where he or she resides. Most Sheriff’s Offices require only a Drivers License, but some
counties may require a second form of identification when applying for your LTCF. It is very important that you check the requirements of your individual county.

Any non-resident 21 years of age or older may apply to a Sheriff’s office in the State of Pennsylvania, provided that they currently hold a Carry Permit in their current state of residence (if applicable - not all states allow Carry Permits). Not all counties will grant non-resident permits, so you should check the information in the next section to see if the county you are interested in will grant a permit.

Now it’s time to look at the steps required to apply...

### 2.1 Contact Your Sheriff

Before you begin the process, it is advantageous to contact your local sheriff’s office in the city or county where you currently reside in order to obtain the most detailed, accurate requirements. Questions specific to completion of the application, residency, or acceptable proof of handgun competency should be directed to the Sheriff’s Office. You can find a convenient listing of local sheriff’s firearm websites and contact info below:

NOTE: Counties that are known to have accepted non-resident applications are marked with an asterisks (*).

- *Adam’s County*
- *Allegeny County*
- *Armstrong County*
- *Beaver County*
- *Bedford County*
- *Berks County*
- *Blair County*
- *Bradford County*
- *Bucks County*
- *Butler County*
- *Cambria County*
- *Cameron County*
- *Carbon County*
- *Centre County*
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**Good to Know**

When you contact your local Sheriff, you may want to ask the following questions:

1. Are fingerprints or any other additional paperwork required in my county?
2. What are the total fees required when applying for a LTCF?
3. Who should my check be made out to?
4. What documents, if any, do you need as proof of firearm competence?
5. Do you offer firearm training courses in my county?
6. Where should I submit my application, paperwork and payment?

2.2 Gun Safety and Training

Unlike some other States, such as Florida, Pennsylvania does not require a proof of firearm competency in order to obtain a LTCF. However, it may be highly advantageous to consider one of the following training options if you do not have familiarity with using a firearm:

1. Completing any National Rifle Association firearms safety or training course. [NRA Instructor Training courses](#) are posted online, or you may request a list of Training Counselors in your geographic area by contacting the NRA Training Department at 703-267-1430;
2. Completing a firearms safety course in your local jurisdiction. Some counties do offer their own firearm safety courses. You should check with your local Sheriff's Office to see if it applies in your county.
3. Completing any firearms safety or training course or class available to the general public offered by a law-enforcement agency, junior college, college, or private or public institution or organization or firearms training school utilizing instructors certified by the National Rifle Association or the Department of Criminal Justice Services;
4. Completing any firearms training or safety course or class, including an electronic, video, or on-line course, conducted by a state-certified or National Rifle Association-certified firearms instructor.
2.3 The Application

Now that you have spoken to your sheriff’s office, it’s time to complete the application. You can find an example of the generic application here, or you may send a written request for an application packet to your local Sheriff’s office. You may also visit one of the county websites listed in Section 2.1 of this document for county-specific forms.

Most of the questions on the application form are very straightforward, and cover a lot of the same eligibility requirements that have already been discussed in this document. One unique portion of the application is that you are required to provide two non-family references, both of which must be from the same county as the applicant. You want to make sure that you use references that will speak to your good character and sound judgment, as one of the most common denials of LTCFs in Pennsylvania are related to the applicant’s character.

It should be noted that the generic Pennsylvania application form might not be the only paperwork required for your application in your county. Some jurisdictions may require additional information and processing of additional forms. For instance, the city of Philadelphia has a unique application, which can be found here.

2.3.A Fingerprints/Background Check

In Pennsylvania, State Law does not require fingerprints for obtaining an LTCF. However, it is important that you check with your local Sheriff’s office to verify if any additional information that will be needed to assist in their background check and application approval process.

The Sheriff’s offices of Pennsylvania are required to complete their background checks within 45 days of application filing. Each county may have slightly different paperwork, and application plus processing fees vary from county to county, but are usually in the range of about $20.

2.3.B Submitting the Application

Once you have filled out your application and contacted your Sheriff, you may submit your required documentation and any processing fees to the Sheriff’s Office for review. Remember, it is your responsibility to contact your local Sheriff to determine exact fees, paperwork requirements and any other procedures. In some counties, you will need to visit the Sheriff’s office in person to hand in your application, but many counties do allow you to send the application by mail. All counties will eventually require that you visit the Sheriff’s office in person, but only when your application has been completed and it is time to pick it up. Once a completed application is received, the Sheriff’s Office should take no more than 45 days to issue a permit.
Section 03 – Non-Resident Applications

If you are not a resident of Pennsylvania, you may request an Application Package by contacting the Pennsylvania State Sheriff’s Office of the county of your choice, or by following one of the links in Section 2.1 to visit the county’s website related to firearm licenses.

It should be noted that a visit to the Sheriff’s Office is required for all non-resident applicants before submitting your application. In addition, a non-resident applicant must maintain a current license to carry in their home state of residence (where applicable). Please note that not all counties in PA will accept out of state applicants. Refer to section 2.1 to see a list of counties that have recently been reported to accept non-resident applications.

Section 04 – Reciprocity

Reciprocity with regard to handgun permits means that two states have a written agreement to honor the permits issued by the other. It is important to read the information below very carefully as some states allow Pennsylvania permit holders to carry in their state, and others are simply states which are honored by Pennsylvania. It is always recommended that you contact a state prior to carrying your weapon so as to avoid any misunderstanding or unknowingly breaking the law.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The following information may change frequently, so it is always important to check with ANY state in which you plan to carry your weapon, BEFORE you enter that state with a weapon. This list is meant as a reference, and nothing more.

**Good to Know**

It’s important to note that not all states allow you to carry in the same manner. Please become familiar with the laws of each state you choose to carry in using your Pennsylvania LTCF. Failure to do so could result in criminal charges.

Listing of states which Pennsylvania has written reciprocity with (for resident LTCFs):

- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Florida
- Georgia
Kentucky  
Maine  
Michigan  
Mississippi  
Missouri  
New Hampshire  
North Carolina  
Oklahoma  
South Dakota  
Tennessee  
Texas  
Virginia  
West Virginia  
Wyoming

Listing of states which Pennsylvania has statutory reciprocity with (for resident LTCFs):

Colorado  
Iowa  
Indiana  
Kansas  
Louisiana  
Montana  
North Dakota  
Utah  
Wisconsin

Pennsylvania non-resident permit holders

Pennsylvania non-resident permit holders should contact each reciprocal state to determine if their permit will be recognized prior to carrying in that jurisdiction.
1. Do firearms need to be registered in Pennsylvania?
Handguns are not registered in Pennsylvania, but other firearms (such as machine guns) must be registered.

2. May I travel through Pennsylvania with a firearm in my vehicle?
You may not transport a loaded firearm in your vehicle without a LTCF.

3. May I “open carry” a firearm in Pennsylvania?
A firearm may be carried openly in Pennsylvania except where prohibited by statute (such as Philadelphia).

4. What is the legal age to purchase or possess a firearm?
Per 18 Pa.C.S. § 6110.1 (Possession of firearm by minor), the minimum age to possess a firearm is 18 with two exceptions:

   1. The minor is under the supervision of a parent, grandparent, legal guardian, or an adult acting with the expressed consent of the minor's parent or legal guardian and involved in lawful activity.
   2. The minor is lawfully involved in hunting or trapping activities.

5. What are the laws concerning the private sale of a handgun?
To privately sell a firearm, it is recommended that you safeguard information pertaining to the transaction such as the date the firearm was sold, the complete name and address of the buyer, and the make, model, and serial number of the firearm. The seller and buyer of a handgun must be a resident of the state in which the transfer occurs. Should the firearm ever be located at a crime scene, trace of the firearm will determine the licensed dealer who last sold the firearm and will identify the last buyer of the firearm. To have your name removed from this process, you may consider placing your firearm on consignment with a licensed dealer. This will also ensure that the firearm is transferred only to a lawfully eligible individual.

6. Does one have to have U.S. citizenship to be eligible to purchase a firearm?
Non-citizens can own firearms in Pennsylvania.

10. Is a License to Carry Firearms issued in another state valid or recognized in Pennsylvania?
States with which Pennsylvania has entered into License to Carry Firearms reciprocity agreements, or which Pennsylvania will grant recognition, are listed in Section 04 – Reciprocity of this guide.
11. Are Pennsylvania License to Carry Firearms issued to non-Pennsylvania residents?
Yes. Please see the Non-Resident section of this guide.

15. I am a new resident to Pennsylvania and possess a License to Carry Firearms issued by a permit-reciprocal state. Will my permit still be honored in Pennsylvania?
A permit issued by a state in which Pennsylvania has established License to Carry Firearms reciprocity or recognition will be honored in Pennsylvania as long as the permit remains valid regardless of the change of address. It is suggested that you confirm the validity of the permit with the issuing agency in this instance.
Section 06 – Online Resources

Application Forms

Gun News Daily

Gun Rights Report

Hunter Education Class Locator

Keep & Bear Arms News

NRA – ILA

NRA Instructor Training courses

NRA News

The Gun Wire
Section 07 – Lost, Stolen, Destroyed or Expired Permits

7.1 Lost, Stolen or Destroyed

If your permit is lost, stolen, or destroyed, you must contact your local Sheriff’s Office to obtain specific replacement guidelines. Most Sheriffs require you to appear in person and sign legal documentation. Many will charge a nominal fee of $5-$10.

7.2 Renewing Your Permit

If your permit has expired, you may obtain a new permit through the same application process that you went through for your initial permit; the only difference being that you do not have to appear in person for a permit renewal, and may submit all paperwork via the mail. All fees apply for renewal as they do with new permits. The circuit court that receives the application shall promptly notify the applicant if the application is incomplete or if the fee submitted is incorrect.

If the new five-year permit is issued while an existing permit remains valid, the new five-year permit will become effective upon the expiration date of the existing permit, provided that the application is received by the court at least 90 days but no more than 180 days prior to the expiration of the existing permit.

7.3 Change of Address

The Sheriff’s Office that issued a valid License to Carry Firearms will issue a replacement permit with the permit holder’s new address if the permit holder can present the valid permit and proof of a new address. Contact your local Sheriff’s Office to initiate this process.
Section 08 – Concealed Weapon Possession Restrictions

The following is a list of places where you are restricted from carrying a weapon or handgun even if you have a permit (outside of Philadelphia, which maintains its own set of restrictions). Keep in mind that this list is simplified and may not contain every location that is off limits to LTCF holders. If you have a question regarding a specific location or concern, it is always best to contact the Pennsylvania State Police or the local Sheriff’s Office.

As a basic rule, concealed handguns are not allowed in/on:

1. State Parks
2. K-12 Schools
3. Casinos
4. Court Facilities
5. Pittsburgh International Airport
6. State Capital Building
7. U.S. Federal Buildings
8. Any private property where the property owner or tenant has placed signs or placards denoting that guns are forbidden.
9. Detention facilities, correctional institutes or mental hospitals.

Some important highlights from the State Laws are shown below:

§912. Possession of Weapon on School Property.

(a) Definition.—Notwithstanding the definition of “weapon” in section 907 (relating to possessing instruments of crime), “weapon” for purposes of this section shall include but not be limited to any knife, cutting instrument, cutting tool, nun-chuck stick, firearm, shotgun, rifle and any other tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury.

(b) Offense defined.—A person commits a misdemeanor of the first degree if he possesses a weapon in the buildings of, on the grounds of, or in any conveyance providing transportation to or from any elementary or secondary publicly-funded educational institution, any elementary or secondary private school licensed by the Department of Education or any elementary or secondary parochial school.

(c) Defense—It shall be a defense that the weapon is possessed and used in conjunction with a lawful supervised school activity or course or is possessed for other lawful purpose. (Added by L.1980, Act 167(1), eff. 12/15/80.)

§913. Possession of Firearm or Other Dangerous Weapon in Court Facility.
(f) Definitions.—As used in this section, the following words and phrases shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection:

“Court facility.” The courtroom of a court of record; a courtroom of a community court; the courtroom of a district justice; a courtroom of the Philadelphia Municipal Court; a courtroom of the Pittsburgh Magistrates Court; a courtroom of the Traffic Court of Philadelphia; judge’s chambers; witness rooms; jury deliberation rooms; attorney conference rooms; prisoner holding cells; offices of court clerks, the district attorney, the sheriff and probation and parole officers; and any adjoining corridors.
Section 09 – Laws Regarding the Use of Firearms

Please review the following statutes with regard to the use of your firearm. It is very important to be familiar with the official legal guidelines of every aspect of owning and concealing a firearm in the State of Pennsylvania.

Here is a link to Official Pennsylvania Gun Laws.

Please note that this link may not represent the entirety of Pennsylvania’s laws regarding firearm use, possession and concealment.
Section 10 – Three Reminders for Safe Concealment of Weapons

In order to safely and legally carry your weapon, it’s important to consider these four reminders:

1. **Remember that you are carrying a concealed weapon to protect life.**

Whether the life is your own, or that of a complete stranger, the only reason you should use a concealed weapon is to protect life. The purpose is not to bully, harass, or otherwise intimidate those who do not demonstrate an immediate and deadly threat. The purpose is not to show off or feel good about one’s self. The sole purpose is protection of life.

2. **Know when it is appropriate to use your weapon.**

In order to use your weapon, your attacker must have:

   a. **THE ABILITY** – the attacker is armed, or appears to be armed;
   b. **THE OPPORTUNITY** – the attacker is positioned in a manner which allows him easy access to inflict harm; or,
   c. **THE INTENT** – the attacker is hostile or using words or body language to suggest that he intends to harm you.

If all three criteria are not met, then you should think twice before using your weapon. For example, if the attacker has the opportunity and intent to harm, but lacks the ability (he is unarmed, or not equal in size/stature), then your claim of self-defense might not hold water. Or, if your adversary appears to be armed and is in a position to harm you, but shows no signs of malicious, hostile intent, then a court of law would seriously question your motive for drawing and using your weapon.

3. **Don’t be led by emotions.**

Choosing to carry a weapon is a decision that comes with a great deal of responsibility. When you are armed, you have forfeited your right to initiate any confrontation which could escalate or become violent. In short, you must be able to keep you cool! This means you cannot shout at the driver who cuts you off as you pass by him with windows down. You must ignore the men who are looking your girlfriend up and down as you leave the movie theater. If someone attempts to start a fight with you, you must respond with a smile and walk away. By carrying a concealed weapon, you have a legal and moral responsibility to de-escalate any potentially dangerous situations unless you are engaged by an attacker who meets all three of the above “attack elements.”
Section 11 – Disclaimer

This information is provided as a collection of publicly available data by Permit Services. While Permit Services makes every attempt to maintain current and accurate information in its guides, direct contact with the appropriate Department representative should be made in matters that require confirmation of the intent or currency of the information presented in this document and on our website.

11.1 Disclaimer of Liability

With respect to documents and information available in this guide, Permit Services makes no warranty, expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability and fitness for a particular purpose arising out of the use or inability to use the data, or assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information, apparatus, product, or process disclosed, or represents that its use would not infringe privately owned rights. Permit Services cannot guarantee the accuracy of any third-party information which may be linked to in this document, and is not responsible for any content on third party websites. Follow links at your own risk.