



Applying for a Resident

License to Carry Firearms

In Massachusetts, in order to lawfully purchase or possess a handgun or large capacity weapon, a person must have a License to Carry Firearms (“License”).

Q. What are the standards for issuance?

A. A License is issued at the discretion (by choice) of the local Licensing Authority to residents of the Commonwealth.

Licenses will be refused to a person who:

- has ever been adjudicated a youthful offender, or convicted as an adult of: a felony, a misdemeanor for which you could have received a sentence of imprisonment for more than two years (which includes OUI after July 1994), a “violent crime,” a violation of a gun law for which jail time could have been imposed, or a violation of a drug law;
- has been confined to a hospital or institution for mental illness, or a person who has been under treatment for or confinement for drug addiction or habitual drunkenness, unless submitted with an affidavit from a physician;
- is the subject of a restraining order;
- is under 21 years of age;
- is an alien; or
- is the subject of an outstanding arrest warrant in any state or federal jurisdiction.

Q. Where do I apply?

A. At the police department in the city or town in which you live or have a place of business.

Q. What can I expect for the application procedure?

A. You will be required to fill out a standard application, be fingerprinted and be photographed (or supply photos of a specific size). You can also expect to be interviewed. Each License is valid for up to six years and will expire on your birthday, and will cost \$100.00.

Because the law does not forbid the licensing authority from asking for extra items, applicants in some towns are asked to provide any of the following items: utility bills to prove residency, birth certificate to prove citizenship, letters of reference, a note from a doctor, or a letter documenting the reason for the License application.

Q. What are the classes of Licenses?

A. A Class A License to Carry Firearms will cover purchase and possession of all handguns, rifles and shotguns, including those now considered “large capacity.” A Class B License to Carry Firearms will cover possession of large capacity rifles and shotguns, and non large capacity handguns. A Class B License does not permit the holder to carry concealed or loaded on a public way. (Generally, a handgun or rifle is large capacity if it can hold more than ten rounds of ammunition, a shotgun if it can hold more than five shot shells.)

Q. Are there any restrictions on these Licenses?

A. According to the law, all Class A and Class B Licenses will be issued for “all lawful purposes.” However, a licensing authority is allowed to impose any restrictions on the “possession, use and carrying” of firearms as he deems proper. The penalty for not complying with the restrictions is a fine of \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Q. Will I have to take a training course?

A. The law requires all persons not holding a License to carry as of June 1, 1998 to provide a basic firearm safety certificate. Future License renewals are exempt by law from this requirement.

Q. How long does the application process take?

A. The local police department must send your fingerprints to the Colonel of the State Police within seven days of application; the Colonel has 30 days to respond. The License can not be issued until the Colonel’s office has okayed it. The procedure takes from two to six weeks.

Q. What if I’m denied, even though I meet the standards in the law?

A. The law says you can appeal a suspension, revocation or denial of a License by filing a petition for judicial review in district court within 90 days. The law also says that if you do not get a License within 40 days from your date of application, you can assume you are denied and go to court. The court will expect you to prove that the chief’s decision to deny you was “capricious” or “arbitrary.”

Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2004 created a Firearms Review board to review the cases of persons disqualified by misdemeanor convictions, and to vote on whether to restore the firearms rights of persons otherwise disqualified.

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