



## Colorado Law Summary: Colorado Firearms Laws<sup>1</sup>

Both the U.S. constitution and the Colorado constitution protect the right to keep and bear arms.<sup>2</sup> Federal, state, and local governments can regulate firearms, as long as they are consistent with constitutional protections. This law summary provides information specifically related to Colorado laws governing firearms.<sup>3</sup>

### Purchases and Sales

Federal law requires firearms dealers to be licensed (federal firearms licensee, or FFL) and beginning July 1, 2025, Colorado law will require an FFL to also have a state firearms dealer permit in order to deal firearms in Colorado.<sup>4</sup> Federal law requires a person purchasing a firearm from an FFL to undergo a background check and Colorado law further requires persons purchasing a firearm from a private seller to undergo a background check. Both an FFL and a private seller are prohibited under Colorado law from transferring a firearm to a buyer until the seller has obtained approval for the transfer following a background check required by state or federal law.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Colorado law imposes a waiting period for delivery of a purchased firearm that is the longer of three days or when the seller obtains approval following the background check.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This summary contains information commonly requested from the [Office of Legislative Legal Services](#). It does not represent an official legal opinion of the General Assembly or the state of Colorado and does not bind the members of the General Assembly. It is intended to provide a general overview of Colorado law as of the date of its preparation. Any person needing legal advice should consult the person's own lawyer and should not rely on the information in this memorandum.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Const. amend. II; Colo. Const. art. II, § 13.

<sup>3</sup> This summary does not include information about federal firearms laws and regulations. The two principal federal firearms laws are the National Firearms Act (26 U.S.C. § 5801 et seq.) and the Gun Control Act of 1968 (18 U.S.C. § 921, et seq.).

<sup>4</sup> § 18-12-401.5, C.R.S.

<sup>5</sup> §§ 18-12-112, C.R.S. (private transfers) and 18-12-112.5, C.R.S. (transfers by licensed dealers).

<sup>6</sup> § 18-12-115, C.R.S.

The Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) serves as the point of contact for background checks in Colorado. CBI is prohibited from approving a firearm transfer until it determines that its background investigation is complete and that the transfer would not violate state or federal law. CBI is required to deny a firearm transfer if the buyer or recipient was convicted of certain misdemeanors in the previous five years, even though the person might not be prohibited from possessing a firearm pursuant to state or federal law.<sup>7</sup>

Colorado law includes some additional regulations related to firearms sales. For example, although federal and state law prohibit selling handguns to juveniles, Colorado law also prohibits selling any firearm to, or any purchase of a firearm by, a person younger than 21 years of age.<sup>8</sup> Colorado also prohibits the sale, transfer, or possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines.<sup>9</sup>

### **Possession and Manufacture**

In addition to regulating firearms purchases, Colorado law regulates who may possess a firearm and places requirements on those who do. Under state law, persons under 18 years of age are prohibited from possessing handguns.<sup>10</sup> Colorado law also prohibits persons convicted of felonies subject to the state Victim Rights Act, crimes that include an act of domestic violence, and other specified felonies from possessing, using, or carrying a firearm.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> § 24-33.5-424 (3)(b.3), C.R.S. The misdemeanors are third degree assault; sexual assault when the victim is at least 15 years of age but less than 17 years of age and the actor is at least 10 years older than the victim and is not the spouse of the victim; unlawful sexual contact; child abuse; certain violations of a protection order; a crime against an at-risk person; certain harassment; a bias-motivated crime; certain cruelty to animals; possession of an illegal weapon; unlawfully providing a firearm other than a handgun to a juvenile; and unlawful conduct involving an unserialized firearm, frame, or receiver.

<sup>8</sup> §§ 18-12-112 (2)(e) and (2)(f), C.R.S. (private sales) and 18-12-112.5 (1)(a.3) and (1)(a.5), C.R.S. (sales by licensed dealers). As of the date of publication of this law summary, a court has enjoined enforcement of these provisions and this summary does not include updates after the date of publication. A different provision of Colorado law that is not subject to the injunction prohibits selling or transferring a firearm other than a handgun to a juvenile without the consent of the juvenile's parent or legal guardian. § 18-12-108.7, C.R.S.

<sup>9</sup> Part 3 of article 12 of title 18, C.R.S. "Large-capacity magazine" is defined to mean a magazine capable of accepting, or that is designed to be readily converted to accept, more than 15 rounds of ammunition or more than 28 inches of shotgun shells, or a detachable magazine capable of accepting more than eight shotgun shells when combined with a fixed magazine. § 18-12-301 (2), C.R.S.

<sup>10</sup> § 18-12-108.5, C.R.S.

<sup>11</sup> §§ 18-6-801 (8), C.R.S. (crimes involving domestic violence) and 18-12-108, C.R.S. (Victim Rights Act crimes and other specified felonies).

Court orders prohibiting firearm possession. Under Colorado law, a person subject to a protection order may be prohibited from possessing firearms. When a court authorizes a protection order as a result of domestic violence involving the threat, use, or attempted use of physical force, the protection order must prohibit the person from possessing or purchasing firearms or ammunition and require the person to relinquish any firearm or ammunition in the person's possession or control.<sup>12</sup> As part of a criminal protection order in other cases involving domestic violence and cases involving crimes subject to the state Victim Rights Act, a court may prohibit possession or control of firearms or other weapons.<sup>13</sup>

**Extreme risk protection orders.**<sup>14</sup> An extreme risk protection order (ERPO) prohibits a person who poses a significant risk of causing personal injury to self or others in the near future from having in their custody or control, or from purchasing, possessing, or receiving, a firearm. A person subject to an ERPO, known as a respondent, must surrender all firearms in the person's control.

A family or household member of the respondent, law enforcement officer or agency, licensed medical care provider, licensed mental health-care provider, licensed educator, or district attorney may request an ERPO by filing a petition with a court. A request for a temporary ERPO does not require notice to the respondent. Upon request for a temporary ERPO, the court must hold a hearing in person or by telephone on the day the petition is filed or on the next court day. If a court finds that the respondent poses a significant risk of causing personal injury to self or others in the near future, the court shall issue a temporary ERPO.

Within 14 days after issuing a temporary ERPO, the court shall schedule a hearing; provide the respondent with notice of the hearing; and appoint an attorney, at the court's expense, for the respondent. If the court finds that the respondent poses a significant risk of causing personal injury to self or others, the court shall issue an ERPO for a period of 364 days. An ERPO automatically expires but can be renewed for up to one year.

A respondent may request termination of the ERPO once during the period that the order is in effect. Upon hearing the matter, the court shall terminate the ERPO if the respondent establishes that they no longer pose a significant risk of causing personal injury to self or others.

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<sup>12</sup> §§ 13-14-105.5, C.R.S. (civil protection orders) and 18-1-1001 (9), C.R.S. (criminal protection orders).

<sup>13</sup> § 18-1-1001 (3), C.R.S. Victim Rights Act crimes are defined in § 24-4.1-302 (1), C.R.S.

<sup>14</sup> Article 14.5 of title 13, C.R.S.

**Possession and manufacture of ghost guns.**<sup>15</sup> Colorado law prohibits possessing, purchasing, transporting, receiving, selling, offering to sell, or transferring a frame or receiver of a firearm that is not imprinted with a serial number, commonly referred to as a ghost gun. It is also unlawful to possess, purchase, transport, sell, offer to sell, or transfer an unfinished frame or receiver unless it is required by federal law to be imprinted with a serial number and it is imprinted with a serial number. State law prohibits manufacturing a firearm, including through the use of a 3-D printer, unless the manufacturer is a federally licensed firearm manufacturer.

### **Safe Storage and Reporting Requirements**

**Safe storage.** Colorado law requires that firearms be responsibly and securely stored when not in use to prevent access by unsupervised juveniles and other unauthorized users. Failure to responsibly and securely store a firearm upon any premises that the person owns or controls when the person knows or reasonably should know that a juvenile can gain access to the firearm without the permission of the juvenile's parent or guardian or when a resident of the premises is ineligible to possess a firearm pursuant to state or federal law is a class 2 misdemeanor.<sup>16</sup>

Colorado law prohibits knowingly leaving a firearm in an unattended vehicle unless the firearm is stored in a locked container and the container is in a locked vehicle, in the locked trunk of a locked vehicle, or in a locked recreational vehicle. If the firearm is a handgun, the storage container must be hard-sided, unless the owner is disabled, and placed out of plain view. If the firearm is not a handgun, the storage container may be hard-sided or soft-sided, and if the firearm is stored in a soft-sided container, the firearm must have a locking device installed while stored. Unsafe storage of a firearm in a vehicle is a civil infraction.<sup>17</sup>

**Reporting lost or stolen firearms.** State law requires a person who owns a firearm that has been lost or stolen to report the loss or theft to a law enforcement agency within five days after discovering the loss or theft. A first offense for failure to report a lost or stolen firearm is a civil infraction, punishable by a \$25 fine. A second or subsequent offense is a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum \$500 fine.<sup>18</sup>

### **Carrying Restrictions**

**Open carry.** Generally, state law does not prohibit openly carrying a firearm in public, though there are some places where open carry is prohibited (see *Specific places where carrying a firearm is prohibited*, below). A local government may

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<sup>15</sup> § 18-12-111.5, C.R.S.

<sup>16</sup> § 18-12-114, C.R.S.

<sup>17</sup> § 18-12-114.5, C.R.S.

<sup>18</sup> § 18-12-113, C.R.S.

prohibit open carry in a building or specific area within its jurisdiction. A local government that prohibits openly carrying a firearm in a building or specific area must post signs at public entrances to the building or specific area informing persons that open carrying of firearms is prohibited.<sup>19</sup>

**Concealed carry.** A person may carry a concealed handgun with a valid permit.<sup>20</sup> Carrying a concealed weapon in public without a permit is a class 1 misdemeanor. A local government may prohibit a person with a concealed carry permit from carrying a concealed handgun in a building or specific area within the local government's jurisdiction. A local government may not impose criminal penalties for prohibited concealed carry. A local government that prohibits carrying a concealed firearm in a building or specific area must post signs at public entrances to the building or area informing persons that concealed carry is prohibited.<sup>21</sup>

**Specific places where carrying a firearm is prohibited.** Colorado law prohibits carrying a firearm in a polling location, or within 100 feet of a ballot drop box, on the day of an election or during the time when voting is permitted for an election. Also, a person may not carry a firearm within a central count facility, or within 100 feet of any building in which a central count facility is located, during ongoing election administration activities. Carrying a firearm at any of these election-related locations is a misdemeanor, punishable by a maximum \$250 fine and up to 120 days' imprisonment in a county jail; except that a second or subsequent offense is punishable by a maximum \$1,000 fine and up to 364 days' imprisonment.<sup>22</sup>

It is a class 1 misdemeanor for a person to knowingly carry a firearm in or on the grounds of a licensed child care center, public or private elementary, middle, junior high, high, or vocational school or any public or private college, university, or seminary.<sup>23</sup> However, the law includes exemptions from the prohibition, including for law enforcement officers and security guards, for the purpose of conducting an educational program, and in certain parking areas.<sup>24</sup>

Colorado law prohibits knowingly carrying a firearm in state legislative buildings, including buildings in which the offices of elected members are located; buildings that house a local government's governing body, including buildings in which the offices of elected members or the chief executive officer of a local government are located (local government buildings); and courthouses or other buildings used for court proceedings. However, a local government may enact a law permitting

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<sup>19</sup> § 29-11.7-104, C.R.S.

<sup>20</sup> § 18-12-105, C.R.S.

<sup>21</sup> § 18-12-214 (1)(c), C.R.S.

<sup>22</sup> § 1-13-724, C.R.S.

<sup>23</sup> § 18-12-105.5, C.R.S.

<sup>24</sup> §§ 18-12-105.5 (3) and 18-12-214 (3), C.R.S.

carrying a firearm at a local government building. Unlawful carrying of a firearm in a government building is a class 1 misdemeanor.<sup>25</sup>

### **Concealed Carry Permits**

A permit to carry a concealed handgun (permit) authorizes the permittee to carry a concealed handgun throughout the state, except for places prohibited by state or local law.<sup>26</sup> Colorado law requires county sheriffs to issue permits to an applicant who meets the following criteria:

- Is a legal resident of the state of Colorado;
- Is 21 years of age or older;
- Is not ineligible to possess a firearm pursuant to state or federal law;
- Has not been convicted of perjury in relation to information provided or deliberately omitted on a permit application;
- Does not chronically and habitually use alcoholic beverages to the extent that the applicant's normal faculties are impaired;
- Is not an unlawful user of or addicted to a controlled substance, including marijuana;
- Is not subject to a protection order, including an extreme risk protection order; and
- Demonstrates competence with a handgun through certification as a firearms safety instructor, participation in organized shooting competitions, current military service, current certification as a peace officer, certain prior military or law enforcement service, or completion of a concealed handgun training class.<sup>27</sup>

A sheriff may deny, revoke, suspend, or refuse to renew a permit if the sheriff has a reasonable belief that an applicant or permittee does not meet the criteria for a permit or that documented previous behavior by the applicant makes it likely the applicant will present a danger to self or others.<sup>28</sup> An applicant must submit to a background check to verify eligibility for a permit.

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<sup>25</sup> § 18-12-105.3, C.R.S.

<sup>26</sup> § 18-12-214, C.R.S.

<sup>27</sup> § 18-12-203 (1), C.R.S.

<sup>28</sup> § 18-12-203 (2) and (3), C.R.S.

Permits are valid for five years. A permittee may renew a permit within 120 days prior to the expiration of a permit and no later than six months after the expiration of a permit.<sup>29</sup>

Sheriffs are required to establish and collect fees for issuing and renewing permits that reflect the actual direct and indirect costs to the sheriff of processing permit applications. The maximum fee for a new permit is \$100; the maximum permit renewal fee is \$50.<sup>30</sup> These amounts are in addition to the cost of a background check required for the issuance of a permit. The Colorado Bureau of Investigation sets the amount of the background check fee.

### **Local Regulations**

Local governments may enact laws governing or prohibiting the sale, purchase, transfer, or possession of a firearm, ammunition, or firearm component or accessory.<sup>31</sup> The local law may not be less restrictive than state law. As discussed above, a local government may regulate open or concealed carry of a firearm in a building or specific area within its jurisdiction. However, a local government may not restrict a person's ability to travel with a weapon in a private automobile or other private means of conveyance for hunting or for lawful protection of a person or property while traveling into, through, or within a local jurisdiction, regardless of the number of times the person stops in a jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup>

This summary does not include all the details contained in state law. To view the law in its entirety, please review the [Colorado Revised Statutes](#), including article 12 of title 18 (offenses relating to firearms and weapons), articles 14 and 14.5 of title 13 (civil protection orders and extreme risk protection orders), and article 11.7 of title 29 (local regulation of firearms).

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<sup>29</sup> § 18-12-211, C.R.S.

<sup>30</sup> §§ 18-12-205 (2)(b), C.R.S. (new permit fee) and 18-12-211 (1), C.R.S. (renewal fee).

<sup>31</sup> § 29-11.7-103, C.R.S.

<sup>32</sup> § 18-12-105.6, C.R.S.