



# Weapons Carry Licenses

## **§ 16-11-129. Weapons carry license; temporary renewal permit; mandamus; verification of license**

**(a) Application for weapons carry license or renewal license; term.** The judge of the probate court of each county shall, on application under oath, on payment of a fee of \$30.00, and on investigation of applicant pursuant to subsections (b) and (d) of this Code section, issue a weapons carry license or renewal license valid for a period of five years to any person whose domicile is in that county or who is on active duty with the United States armed forces and who is not a domiciliary of this state but who either resides in that county or on a military reservation located in whole or in part in that county at the time of such application. Such license or renewal license shall authorize that person to carry any weapon in any county of this state notwithstanding any change in that person's county of residence or state of domicile. Applicants shall submit the application for a weapons carry license or renewal license to the judge of the probate court on forms prescribed and furnished free of charge to persons wishing to apply for the license or renewal license. An application shall be considered to be for a renewal license if the applicant has a weapons carry license or renewal license with 90 or fewer days remaining before the expiration of such weapons carry license or renewal license or 30 or fewer days since the expiration of such weapons carry license or renewal license regardless of the county of issuance of the applicant's expired or expiring weapons carry license or renewal license. An applicant who is not a United States citizen shall provide sufficient personal identifying data, including without limitation his or her place of birth and United States issued alien or admission number, as the Georgia Bureau of Investigation may prescribe by rule or regulation. An applicant who is in nonimmigrant status shall provide proof of his or her qualifications for an exception to the federal firearm prohibition pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 922(y). Forms shall be designed to elicit information from the applicant pertinent to his or her eligibility under this Code section, including citizenship, but shall not require data which is nonpertinent or irrelevant, such as serial numbers or other identification capable of being used as a de facto registration of firearms owned by the applicant. The Department of Public Safety shall furnish application forms and license forms required by this Code section. The forms shall be furnished to each judge of each probate court within this state at no cost.

### **(b) Licensing exceptions.**

(1) As used in this subsection, the term:

(A) "Armed forces" means active duty or a reserve component of the United States Army, United States Navy, United States Marine Corps, United States Coast Guard,



United States Air Force, United States National Guard, Georgia Army National Guard, or Georgia Air National Guard.

(B) "Controlled substance" means any drug, substance, or immediate precursor included in the definition of controlled substances in paragraph (4) of Code Section 16-13-21.

(C) "Convicted" means an adjudication of guilt. Such term shall not include an order of discharge and exoneration pursuant to Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 42.

(D) "Dangerous drug" means any drug defined as such in Code Section 16-13-71.

(2) No weapons carry license shall be issued to:

(A) Any person younger than 21 years of age unless he or she:

(i) Is at least 18 years of age;

(ii) Provides proof that he or she has completed basic training in the armed forces of the United States; and

(iii) Provides proof that he or she is actively serving in the armed forces of the United States or has been honorably discharged from such service;

(B) Any person who has been convicted of a felony by a court of this state or any other state; by a court of the United States, including its territories, possessions, and dominions; or by a court of any foreign nation and has not been pardoned for such felony by the President of the United States, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, or the person or agency empowered to grant pardons under the constitution or laws of such state or nation;

(C) Any person against whom proceedings are pending for any felony;

(D) Any person who is a fugitive from justice;

(E) Any person who is prohibited from possessing or shipping a firearm in interstate commerce pursuant to subsections (g) and (n) of 18 U.S.C. Section 922;

(F) Any person who has been convicted of an offense arising out of the unlawful manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance or other dangerous drug;

(G) Any person who has had his or her weapons carry license revoked pursuant to subsection (e) of this Code section within three years of the date of his or her application;



(H) Any person who has been convicted of any of the following:

(i) Carrying a weapon without a weapons carry license in violation of Code Section 16-11-126; or

(ii) Carrying a weapon or long gun in an unauthorized location in violation of Code Section 16-11-127

and has not been free of all restraint or supervision in connection therewith and free of any other conviction for at least five years immediately preceding the date of the application;

(I) Any person who has been convicted of any misdemeanor involving the use or possession of a controlled substance and has not been free of all restraint or supervision in connection therewith or free of:

(i) A second conviction of any misdemeanor involving the use or possession of a controlled substance; or

(ii) Any conviction under subparagraphs (E) through (G) of this paragraph for at least five years immediately preceding the date of the application;

(J) Except as provided for in subsection (b.1) of this Code section, any person who has been hospitalized as an inpatient in any mental hospital or alcohol or drug treatment center within the five years immediately preceding the application. The judge of the probate court may require any applicant to sign a waiver authorizing any mental hospital or treatment center to inform the judge whether or not the applicant has been an inpatient in any such facility in the last five years and authorizing the superintendent of such facility to make to the judge a recommendation regarding whether the applicant is a threat to the safety of others and whether a license to carry a weapon should be issued. When such a waiver is required by the judge, the applicant shall pay a fee of \$3.00 for reimbursement of the cost of making such a report by the mental health hospital, alcohol or drug treatment center, or the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, which the judge shall remit to the hospital, center, or department. The judge shall keep any such hospitalization or treatment information confidential. It shall be at the discretion of the judge, considering the circumstances surrounding the hospitalization and the recommendation of the superintendent of the hospital or treatment center where the individual was a patient, to issue the weapons carry license or renewal license;

(K) Except as provided for in subsection (b.1) of this Code section, any person who has been adjudicated mentally incompetent to stand trial; or



(L) Except as provided for in subsection (b.1) of this Code section, any person who has been adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity at the time of the crime pursuant to Part 2 of Article 6 of Chapter 7 of Title 17.

**(b.1) Petitions for relief from certain licensing exceptions.**

(1) Persons provided for under subparagraphs (b)(2)(J), (b)(2)(K), and (b)(2)(L) of this Code section may petition the court in which such adjudication, hospitalization, or treatment proceedings, if any, under Chapter 3 or 7 of Title 37 occurred for relief. A copy of such petition for relief shall be served as notice upon the opposing civil party or the prosecuting attorney for the state, as the case may be, or their successors, who appeared in the underlying case. Within 30 days of the receipt of such petition, such court shall hold a hearing on such petition for relief. Such prosecuting attorney for the state may represent the interests of the state at such hearing.

(2) At the hearing provided for under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the court shall receive and consider evidence in a closed proceeding concerning:

(A) The circumstances which caused the person to be subject to subparagraph (b)(2)(J), (b)(2)(K), or (b)(2)(L) of this Code section;

(B) The person's mental health and criminal history records, if any. The judge of such court may require any such person to sign a waiver authorizing the superintendent of any mental hospital or treatment center to make to the judge a recommendation regarding whether such person is a threat to the safety of others. When such a waiver is required by the judge, the applicant shall pay a fee of \$3.00 for reimbursement of the cost of making such a report by the mental health hospital, alcohol or drug treatment center, or the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, which the judge shall remit to the hospital, center, or department;

(C) The person's reputation which shall be established through character witness statements, testimony, or other character evidence; and

(D) Changes in the person's condition or circumstances since such adjudication, hospitalization, or treatment proceedings under Chapter 3 or 7 of Title 37.

The judge shall issue an order of his or her decision no later than 30 days after the hearing.

(3) The court shall grant the petition for relief if such court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the person will not likely act in a manner dangerous to public safety in carrying a weapon and that granting the relief will not be contrary to the public interest. A record shall be kept of the hearing; provided, however, that such records



shall remain confidential and be disclosed only to a court or to the parties in the event of an appeal. Any appeal of the court's ruling on the petition for relief shall be de novo review.

(4) If the court grants such person's petition for relief, the applicable subparagraph (b)(2)(J), (b)(2)(K), or (b)(2)(L) of this Code section shall not apply to such person in his or her application for a weapons carry license or renewal; provided, however, that such person shall comply with all other requirements for the issuance of a weapons carry license or renewal license. The clerk of such court shall report such order to the Georgia Crime Information Center immediately, but in no case later than ten business days after the date of such order.

(5) A person may petition for relief under this subsection not more than once every two years. In the case of a person who has been hospitalized as an inpatient, such person shall not petition for relief prior to being discharged from such treatment.

**(c) Fingerprinting.** Following completion of the application for a weapons carry license, the judge of the probate court shall require the applicant to proceed to an appropriate law enforcement agency in the county or to any vendor approved by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for fingerprint submission services with the completed application so that such agency or vendor can capture the fingerprints of the applicant. The law enforcement agency shall be entitled to a fee of \$5.00 from the applicant for its services in connection with fingerprinting and processing of an application. Fingerprinting shall not be required for applicants seeking temporary renewal licenses or renewal licenses.

**(d) Investigation of applicant; issuance of weapons carry license; renewal.**

(1) (A) For weapons carry license applications, the judge of the probate court shall within five business days following the receipt of the application or request direct the law enforcement agency to request a fingerprint based criminal history records check from the Georgia Crime Information Center and Federal Bureau of Investigation for purposes of determining the suitability of the applicant and return an appropriate report to the judge of the probate court. Fingerprints shall be in such form and of such quality as prescribed by the Georgia Crime Information Center and under standards adopted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation may charge such fee as is necessary to cover the cost of the records search.

(B) For requests for license renewals, the presentation of a weapons carry license issued by any probate judge in this state shall be evidence to the judge of the probate court to whom a request for license renewal is made that the fingerprints of the weapons carry license holder are on file with the judge of the probate court who issued



the weapons carry license, and the judge of the probate court to whom a request for license renewal is made shall, within five business days following the receipt of the request, direct the law enforcement agency to request a nonfingerprint based criminal history records check from the Georgia Crime Information Center and Federal Bureau of Investigation for purposes of determining the suitability of the applicant and return an appropriate report to the judge of the probate court to whom a request for license renewal is made.

(2) For both weapons carry license applications and requests for license renewals, the judge of the probate court shall within five business days following the receipt of the application or request also direct the law enforcement agency, in the same manner as provided for in subparagraph (d)(1)(B) of this subsection, to conduct a background check using the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Instant Criminal Background Check System and return an appropriate report to the probate judge.

(3) When a person who is not a United States citizen applies for a weapons carry license or renewal of a license under this Code section, the judge of the probate court shall direct the law enforcement agency to conduct a search of the records maintained by United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement and return an appropriate report to the probate judge. As a condition to the issuance of a license or the renewal of a license, an applicant who is in nonimmigrant status shall provide proof of his or her qualifications for an exception to the federal firearm prohibition pursuant to 18 U.S.C. Section 922(y).

(4) The law enforcement agency shall report to the judge of the probate court within 30 days, by telephone and in writing, of any findings relating to the applicant which may bear on his or her eligibility for a weapons carry license or renewal license under the terms of this Code section. When no derogatory information is found on the applicant bearing on his or her eligibility to obtain a license or renewal license, a report shall not be required. The law enforcement agency shall return the application directly to the judge of the probate court within such time period. Not later than ten days after the judge of the probate court receives the report from the law enforcement agency concerning the suitability of the applicant for a license, the judge of the probate court shall issue such applicant a license or renewal license to carry any weapon unless facts establishing ineligibility have been reported or unless the judge determines such applicant has not met all the qualifications, is not of good moral character, or has failed to comply with any of the requirements contained in this Code section. The judge of the probate court shall date stamp the report from the law enforcement agency to show the date on which the report was received by the judge of the probate court.

**(e) Revocation, loss, or damage to license.**



(1) If, at any time during the period for which the weapons carry license was issued, the judge of the probate court of the county in which the license was issued shall learn or have brought to his or her attention in any manner any reasonable ground to believe the licensee is not eligible to retain the license, the judge may, after notice and hearing, revoke the license of the person upon a finding that such person is not eligible for a weapons carry license pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section or an adjudication of falsification of application, mental incompetency, or chronic alcohol or narcotic usage. The judge of the probate court shall report such revocation to the Georgia Crime Information Center immediately but in no case later than ten days after such revocation. It shall be unlawful for any person to possess a license which has been revoked pursuant to this paragraph, and any person found in possession of any such revoked license, except in the performance of his or her official duties, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) If a person is convicted of any crime or involved in any matter which would make the maintenance of a weapons carry license by such person unlawful pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section, the judge of the superior court or state court hearing such case or presiding over such matter shall inquire whether such person is the holder of a weapons carry license. If such person is the holder of a weapons carry license, then the judge of the superior court or state court shall inquire of such person the county of the probate court which issued such weapons carry license, or if such person has ever had his or her weapons carry license renewed, then of the county of the probate court which most recently issued such person a renewal license. The judge of the superior court or state court shall notify the judge of the probate court of such county of the matter which makes the maintenance of a weapons carry license by such person to be unlawful pursuant to subsection (b) of this Code section. The Council of Superior Court Judges of Georgia and The Council of State Court Judges of Georgia shall provide by rule for the procedures which judges of the superior court and the judges of the state courts, respectively, are to follow for the purposes of this paragraph.

(3) Loss of any license issued in accordance with this Code section or damage to the license in any manner which shall render it illegible shall be reported to the judge of the probate court of the county in which it was issued within 48 hours of the time the loss or damage becomes known to the license holder. The judge of the probate court shall thereupon issue a replacement for and shall take custody of and destroy a damaged license; and in any case in which a license has been lost, he or she shall issue a cancellation order. The judge shall charge the fee specified in subsection (k) of Code Section 15-9-60 for such services.



**(f) (1) Weapons carry license specifications.** Weapons carry licenses issued prior to January 1, 2012, shall be in the format specified by the former provisions of this paragraph as they existed on June 30, 2013.

(2) On and after January 1, 2012, newly issued or renewal weapons carry licenses shall incorporate overt and covert security features which shall be blended with the personal data printed on the license to form a significant barrier to imitation, replication, and duplication. There shall be a minimum of three different ultraviolet colors used to enhance the security of the license incorporating variable data, color shifting characteristics, and front edge only perimeter visibility. The weapons carry license shall have a color photograph viewable under ambient light on both the front and back of the license. The license shall incorporate custom optical variable devices featuring the great seal of the State of Georgia as well as matching demetalized optical variable devices viewable under ambient light from the front and back of the license incorporating microtext and unique alphanumeric serialization specific to the license holder. The license shall be of similar material, size, and thickness of a credit card and have a holographic laminate to secure and protect the license for the duration of the license period.

(3) Using the physical characteristics of the license set forth in paragraph (2) of this subsection, The Council of Probate Court Judges of Georgia shall create specifications for the probate courts so that all weapons carry licenses in this state shall be uniform and so that probate courts can petition the Department of Administrative Services to purchase the equipment and supplies necessary for producing such licenses. The department shall follow the competitive bidding procedure set forth in Code Section 50-5-102.

**(g) Alteration or counterfeiting of license; penalty.** A person who deliberately alters or counterfeits a weapons carry license or who possesses an altered or counterfeit weapons carry license with the intent to misrepresent any information contained in such license shall be guilty of a felony and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than one nor more than five years.

**(h) Licenses for former law enforcement officers.** Except as otherwise provided in Code Section 16-11-130, any person who has served as a law enforcement officer for at least ten of the 12 years immediately preceding the retirement of such person as a law enforcement officer shall be entitled to be issued a weapons carry license as provided for in this Code section without the payment of any of the fees provided for in this Code section. Such person shall comply with all the other provisions of this Code section relative to the issuance of such licenses. As used in this subsection, the term "law enforcement officer" means any peace officer who is employed by the United States government or by the State of Georgia or any political subdivision thereof and who is





required by the terms of his or her employment, whether by election or appointment, to give his or her full time to the preservation of public order or the protection of life and property or the prevention of crime. Such term shall include conservation rangers.

**(i) Temporary renewal licenses.**

(1) Any person who holds a weapons carry license under this Code section may, at the time he or she applies for a renewal of the license, also apply for a temporary renewal license if less than 90 days remain before expiration of the license he or she then holds or if the previous license has expired within the last 30 days.

(2) Unless the judge of the probate court knows or is made aware of any fact which would make the applicant ineligible for a five-year renewal license, the judge shall at the time of application issue a temporary renewal license to the applicant.

(3) Such a temporary renewal license shall be in the form of a paper receipt indicating the date on which the court received the renewal application and shall show the name, address, sex, age, and race of the applicant and that the temporary renewal license expires 90 days from the date of issue.

(4) During its period of validity the temporary renewal license, if carried on or about the holder's person together with the holder's previous license, shall be valid in the same manner and for the same purposes as a five-year license.

(5) A \$1.00 fee shall be charged by the probate court for issuance of a temporary renewal license.

(6) A temporary renewal license may be revoked in the same manner as a five-year license.

**(j) Applicant may seek relief.** When an eligible applicant fails to receive a license, temporary renewal license, or renewal license within the time period required by this Code section and the application or request has been properly filed, the applicant may bring an action in mandamus or other legal proceeding in order to obtain a license, temporary renewal license, or renewal license. When an applicant is otherwise denied a license, temporary renewal license, or renewal license and contends that he or she is qualified to be issued a license, temporary renewal license, or renewal license, the applicant may bring an action in mandamus or other legal proceeding in order to obtain such license. Additionally, the applicant may request a hearing before the judge of the probate court relative to the applicant's fitness to be issued such license. Upon the issuance of a denial, the judge of the probate court shall inform the applicant of his or her rights pursuant to this subsection. If such applicant is the prevailing party, he or



she shall be entitled to recover his or her costs in such action, including reasonable attorney's fees.

**(k) Data base prohibition.** A person or entity shall not create or maintain a multijurisdictional data base of information regarding persons issued weapons carry licenses.

**(l) Verification of license.** The judge of a probate court or his or her designee shall be authorized to verify the legitimacy and validity of a weapons carry license of a license holder pursuant to a subpoena or court order, for public safety purposes to law enforcement agencies pursuant to paragraph (40) of subsection (a) of Code Section 50-18-72, and for licensing to a judge of a probate court or his or her designee pursuant to paragraph (40) of subsection (a) of Code Section 50-18-72; provided, however, that the judge of a probate court or his or her designee shall not be authorized to provide any further information regarding license holders.