

**GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT STUDY – HUNTER SAFETY  
EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS – REPORT**

**NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**JULY 30, 2008**

**HOUSE BILL NO. 1311**

**SECTION 2. . GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT STUDY – HUNTER SAFETY  
EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS – REPORT.** The Game and Fish Department shall study, during the 2007-08 interim, hunter safety education requirements and hunter safety for all ages of hunters. The Game and Fish Department shall report its findings and recommendations to the legislative council by July 1, 2008.

**20.1-03-01.1. Director to appoint and train instructors – Prescribe course material and classroom sites – Certify completion.** The director shall provide classroom instruction on, and shall select, train, and certify persons or department personnel qualified to provide instruction on, firearms and bow safety and hunter responsibility, and shall prescribe the course material to be used, classroom locations, and the dates for teaching the course in this state. The director shall authorize the issuance of a certificate of completion to all persons satisfactorily completing the course.

**20.1-03-01.2. Instruction required before issuance of hunting license – Age limits – Penalty.** No person born after December 31, 1961, except as provided in section 20.1-03-01.3, may be issued any hunting license in this state unless that person submits or exhibits the certificate of completion earned by that person for successful completion of the course of instruction required by sections 20.1-03-01.1 thru 20.1-03-01.3 or the person submits or exhibits a prior North Dakota hunting license issued to that person with that person's hunter education certificate number on the license. A certificate of completion issued by any other state or province of Canada is valid for all purposes. Any person who purchases a hunting license without successfully completing the course of instruction required by sections 20.1-03-01.1 thru 20.1-03-01.3 is guilty of a class 2 noncriminal offense.

**20.1-03-01.3. Exemptions.** Sections 20.1-03-01.1 thru 20.1-03-01.3 do not apply to:

1. Persons under twelve years of age who hunt only with their parent or legal guardian.
2. Persons who hunt exclusively on land of which they are the record title owner or operator.

**1. Overview of ND Hunter Education Program.** . Students must be at least 11 years old to attend and be certified. The course is offered in two formats, focusing on safety, gun handling, ethics, laws and regulations, and basic wildlife biology.

a. Traditional 14-hour classroom hunter education course normally consists of 6 evenings with the final exam and practical exercise on the last day.

b. On-line course, available to persons at least 16 years old and are scheduled over a two week period. Students meet with the instructor on the first evening, then complete 14 on-line quizzes and meet the final evening for the exam and practical exercise.

The program currently has 688 volunteer instructors across the state; they are tested, certified and re-certified based on active involvement.

## **2008 ND Hunter Education Course Summary**

### **Classes – Total 224**

- 193 classes as of 06/29/08
- 8 classes pending
- 23 classes listed on website [www.gf.nd.gov](http://www.gf.nd.gov)

### **Home Study – Total 31 classes**

- 21 classes as of 06/29/08
- 3 classes pending
- 7 classes listed on website

### **Students Certified**

- 4,025 certified as of 07/29/08
- 1,414 certified students, 16 yrs old and older
  - > Approx 35% of students are adults
- 1,636 females certified

## 2. Minimum Hunting Age Requirements

### Small Game ND – No minimum age

36 states: No minimum age  
12 states: 12  
2 states: 10

32 states require an adult  
(Licensed adult required for ages 10-18, age 16 the most common)

### Big Game ND & NY – 14

27 states: No minimum  
16 states: 12  
1 state: 11  
3 states: 10  
3 states: ~~10~~ 8

35 states require an adult  
Licensed adult required for ages 10-18, age 16 the most common)

## 3. Hunter Education Age Requirements

The Hunter Education course is designed for 12 year olds. Most state's which do not have minimum hunting age (North Dakota included), allow children under the age of twelve to hunt with an adult without hunter education.

29 states – no minimum age, but require an adult to accompany those under a specified age (10-14)

1 state – minimum age is 12 years old

11 states – 11 years

7 states – 10 years

2 states – 9 years

45 of the 50 states either require all hunters or all hunters born after a certain date to have hunter education.

### Hunter Education Requirements

Alabama	Born on or after August 1, 1977
Alaska	Under age 16
Arizona	Required for ages 10-14 to hunt big game
Arkansas	Born after December 31, 1968
California	All license buyers
Colorado	On or after January 1, 1949
Connecticut	Required of all persons, regardless of age
Delaware	After January 1, 1967
Florida	On or after June 1, 1975
Hawaii	All license buyers



Georgia	On or after January 1, 1961
Idaho	After January 1, 1975
Illinois	On or after January 1, 1980
Indiana	After December 31, 1986
Iowa	After January 1, 1967
Kansas	On or after July 1, 1957
Kentucky	After January 1, 1975
Louisiana	On or after September 1, 1969
Maine	Previously held license beginning in 1976 or completion of HE
Maryland	Unless you hunted prior to July 1, 1977
Massachusetts	Held license to hunt before January 1, 2007
Michigan	After January 1, 1960
Minnesota	After December 31, 1979
Mississippi	On or after January 1, 1972
Missouri	On or after January 1, 1967
Montana	After January 1, 1985
Nebraska	Ages 12 through 29
Nevada	After January 1, 1960
New Hampshire	All license buyers
New Jersey	Mandatory for all first time firearms hunters
New Mexico	Required for of persons under the age of 18
New York	Regardless of age
North Carolina	Regardless of age, or a hunting license issued prior to July 1, 1991
North Dakota	After December 31, 1961
Ohio	To purchase a license or previously held a hunting license
Oklahoma	On or after January 1, 1972
Oregon	Under age 18
Pennsylvania	To purchase a license, if you have not held a license in PA or other state
Rhode Island	To purchase a license, if you have not held a license in RI
South Carolina	After June 30, 1979
South Dakota	Under age 16
Tennessee	On or after January 1, 1969
Texas	On or after September 2, 1971
Utah	After December 21, 1965
Vermont	Purchase a license, either a previous license or current license or HE certificate
Virginia	12 to 15 years of age, or 16 and over and have never held a license to hunt
Washington	All first time hunters and who are born after January 1, 1972
West Virginia	On or after January 1, 1975
Wisconsin	On or after January 1, 1973
Wyoming	On or after January 1, 1966

#### **4. On-going study being conducted by Responsive Management**

##### **SENATE BILL NO. 2017 (Appropriations Committee)**

**Section 7. Game and Fish Department to Study Recruitment and Retention of Hunters in North Dakota – Report to Legislative Council.** The game and fish department shall study the recruitment and retention of hunters in North Dakota. The study must include identification of programs to recruit and retain hunters in this state. The department shall report its findings to the budget section by December 31, 2008

NDG&F will be able to make further recommendations upon receiving the study results later this fall.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

Remove Barriers to Hunting.

Families Afield initiatives. 25 states have passed laws as a result of Families Afield. Apprentice license programs have shown sharp increase in youth license sales, from 10 to 111 percent. Apprentice license programs help new hunters learn under the watchful eye and guiding hand of licensed adult mentors. Apprenticeship allows a young or new hunter to hunt without a license, with an adult "mentor" for a period of time (one year) prior to completing Hunter Education. Completion of a hunter education course is still required for a new hunter to become fully licensed.

1) Over the last two years, in Michigan alone, these changes have resulted in more than 30,000 new hunters.

2) In Washington State, 60 percent of the apprentice hunters are over 18 years old.

2. Hunter Safety Education Bill (Hunter Education in schools). West Virginia recently signed a bill helping to ensure the state's continued rich hunting heritage. The program, which will be conducted by an instructor certified by the Division of Natural Resources, may be offered over a two-week period to students in grades six through twelve. The program can be part of the physical

education classes, the general education curriculum or offered to students at the end of the school day. Participation is voluntary.

3. Outdoor programs. Initiate programs focused on encouraging children and young adults to get out of the home and outdoors.

- 22 states permit adult-mentored youth hunting prior to completing a Hunter Education course. "Try before you hunt" concept allows youngsters to safely experience hunting before deciding to complete HE.
- In those states that have no minimum age restrictions, the incident rates are .0483 per 1,000 hunters. The remaining states had an incident rate nearly 10% higher at .0534 incidents per 1,000 hunters. In 2007, ND experienced 19 hunting related incidents; the average age of the hunter involved was 38, with the youngest being 13. 6 of the 19 involved out of state hunters.

Four of the Region 6 states (8) that responded to a short questionnaire have apprenticeship programs or are considering a program:

Kansas. Started last year in July. Apprenticeship license is good for the remainder of the license year in which it is purchased, it can not be renewed. A regular license is marked "Apprentice", no extra charge.

South Dakota. New mentorship program, no license is required.

Nebraska has a program, no details.

Utah. No program at this time, being considered. HE graduates are awarded a one year small game license.

### **Families Afield - An initiative for the future of hunting**

Families Afield is an education and outreach program to help states create hunting opportunities for youth, so that more families may enjoy America's greatest outdoor tradition together.

The Families Afield Website is provided in partnership with the National Shooting Sports Foundation, U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and National Wild Turkey Federation

## **Families Afield Model Legislation**

Families Afield legislation seeks to remove the barriers that prevent hunters from passing on hunting traditions. There are four key principles behind Families Afield bills.

- Parents know best when their sons and daughters are ready to begin hunting.
- Permitting people to learn and experience hunting first hand from a mentor before taking hunter education results in better recruitment numbers and ultimately more hunter education graduates.
- Access to big game hunting is critical to improving hunting numbers. Big game hunting has the highest participation, therefore the largest number of potential mentors.
- In general, restrictions on hunting result in lower participation. Restrictions should be implemented only if necessary and factually based.

The Families Afield philosophy is to allow parents to decide when youth are ready to hunt. This can be achieved through an Apprentice Hunting License Program:

- An Apprentice License allows any person to hunt before passing a hunter education course as long as the person is under the direct supervision of a licensed hunter.
- The mentor must be an adult.
- If the apprentice is under 18 years of age, the mentor must have the consent of a parent or guardian.
- An apprentice hunter may not hunt unsupervised or obtain a regular hunting license until such time as the person passes a hunter education course.