

Firearm Background Checks



WHAT ARE FIREARM BACKGROUND CHECKS?

Background checks are utilized to ensure that a prospective firearm-purchaser is not legally prohibited from having a firearm.

- Since the federal background check requirement for purchases from federally licensed firearm dealers has been in place, over 4 million firearm sales to prohibited purchasers have been blocked. (1)
- Currently, Michigan's background check law can best be described as a permit-to-purchase (or licensing) law for private sales of pistols and a background check-only law for purchases from federally licensed firearms dealers. However, there are gaps that could allow those legally prohibited from having firearms to purchase a firearm.
- Beginning in Spring 2024, Michigan will require background checks on all firearm purchases, with some exceptions. It will be required to obtain a license from local law enforcement before purchasing, carrying, possessing, or transporting a firearm in Michigan. This is commonly referred to as a "purchase license", and is void unless used within 30 days after it is issued. The local law enforcement agency issuing the license is required to do so pursuant to a background check ensuring the individual requesting the license is qualified to purchase a firearm and is not a threat to themselves or others and/or would not commit a crime with the firearm. Exceptions to this requirement include people who hold concealed carry licenses, federally licensed firearms dealers, and currently employed police officers. Those who have had a federal national instant criminal background check performed at most 5 days prior to purchasing a firearm are also exempt from this requirement. (2)
- Universal background checks with a licensing requirement for purchase of all firearms would require background checks both from licensed and unlicensed sellers and cover handgun and long gun sales.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS?

Expanding background checks from only licensed firearm dealers to all firearm sales could keep firearms out of the hands of those prohibited from having them, **potentially reducing incidents of firearm-related intimate partner violence, community violence, and mass shootings.**

- Universal background checks and licensing laws are also widely accepted by the public. (3)
- According to an investigation by Everytown for Gun Safety, **1 in 9 people arranging to buy a firearm on the nation's largest firearm marketplace, Armslist.com, were people who could not legally obtain a firearm.** (4) This same investigation found 1.2 million ads for online firearm sales; all of these sales could be completed without a background check. (4)
- Further, a 2015 study completed by Harvard Injury Prevention Center found that **22% of Americans who acquired their firearm in the prior two years did so without completing a background check.** (5)
- **90% of background checks completed using the NICS database are completed immediately, with 99.3-99.8% accuracy.** (6)
- States that go beyond the federal background check requirements have seen **significant reductions in firearm homicides, suicides, and trafficking.** (7, 8, 9)



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