



## Wisconsin State Legislature

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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### **Mentoring New Hunters Continues a Wisconsin Tradition**

With hunting season upon us, it is important to note that there have been some changes to the state's mentored hunting law. Wisconsin's mentored hunting program began with a law that was approved in 2009 allowing individuals 11 years old or older to participate. Since that time, 179,000 new hunters have participated in the program. The mentored hunting program allows potential hunters to try hunting under the close supervision of a mentor before they commit to their own hunting license and hunter safety education.

As of Monday, November 13th, any person, regardless of age, is able to purchase a mentored hunting license. A new law passed this session changed the mentored hunting law to allow younger children to participate in the mentored hunting program, meaning that parents can decide when their children are ready, rather than the state. The new law also provides that both the mentor and the mentored hunter may be in possession of a firearm, bow or crossbow. This is important because a bow or weapon that fits, or is right for, an adult might be too large for a child. Under the prior law, a mentor and mentee were required to share one hunting device.

Forty-two states have a mentored hunting program. Thirty-four states, or 81 percent, do not have an age requirement for mentored hunting. All of our neighboring states allow mentored hunting without an age requirement. Studies show that participants in mentored hunting have fewer accidents while hunting than the general hunting population. In fact, they have six times fewer accidents. Nationwide, there are 8.2 incidents per million mentored hunting participants, compared to 50 incidents per million participants in the general hunting population.

To be a hunting mentor, an individual must be at least 18 years old and must hold a current valid hunting license. They must also either be the parent or guardian of the person they are mentoring, or be authorized by that person's parent or guardian, unless the person they are mentoring is over the age of 18. The mentor must be within arm's reach of the person they are mentoring. Finally, unless the mentor was born before January 1, 1973, they must have successfully completed a hunter safety course.

Opponents of the new law argued that the age requirement should remain in place because hunting requires physical strength to be able to safely handle a shotgun or bow and maturity to understand the risks associated with these devices. They also argued that allowing a mentor and the person being mentored to each have a firearm or bow increased the risk that the mentor would get distracted by their own hunting and would not be solely focused on teaching outdoor and firearm safety skills. While I understand their concerns, I agree that parents are the best people to make decisions about when their children are ready to hunt, so I supported the changes made in the new law.

To purchase a mentored hunting license, go to [Go Wild](#) or visit one of the [DNR Service Centers](#) or authorized [sales locations](#) throughout the state. The cost is \$7. As with all new customers, new hunters 11 and younger will need to have a Social Security Number to establish a Go Wild customer ID and to purchase a license. Parents/guardians should be prepared to provide that information when making an initial license purchase for their child.

*If you have any questions about any of the information I have included or if you have suggestions on other topics or issues you would like learn more about, you may call my office toll-free at (800) 991-5541; write me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707; or e-mail me at: [Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us](mailto:Sen.Olsen@legis.state.wi.us). You can also sign up for our newsletter at our website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/senate/sen14/news/index.htm>.*