

The Apprentice Hunter Validation

What is it? In other states this is often called a Hunter Education Deferral Program. Essentially an Apprentice Hunter Validation enables an individual who does is normally required to have a Firearms Safety (FAS) Certificate, but does not have one, to try hunting for a year under the supervision of a licensed adult hunter.

When is a Firearms Safety Certificate or Apprentice Hunter Validation required? Anyone born after 1979 is required to have a FAS Certificate to hunt with a firearm, except youth age 12 and under may hunt small game (11 and under for turkeys) without a Firearms Safety Certificate/ Apprentice Hunter Validation as long as a parent or guardian accompanies them.

Who is eligible to receive one? Residents of Minnesota.

Why is it the Apprentice Hunter Validation program needed? Some communities have more demand for FAS classes than their volunteer instructors can provide, and youth are unable to get into classes or have to go onto a waiting list. Some parents and their kids procrastinate, and when hunting season approaches there are no classes available. Most people have very busy schedules. Many adults that are getting into hunting because of their friends and spouses, but are unaware of the FAS requirement. Some potential new hunters are not sure if they will like hunting, and would like to try it before they commit to undertaking a training program.

What restrictions are there for individuals hunting with an Apprentice Hunter Validation? An Apprentice Hunter must be accompanied by a licensed adult- and other Apprentice Hunters cannot “accompany” each other. Accompanied is defined as being close enough to each other to permit “uninterrupted visual contact and unaided verbal communication.” Apprentice hunters may hunt deer and small game.

Will this diminish hunting safety in Minnesota, or undermine the Firearms Safety Hunter Education Program? No. Data from the International Hunter Education Association indicates that mentored hunters are as safe as other hunters, and hunting continues to get safer thanks primarily to 50 years of hunter education programs. Rather than undermine FAS and hunter education, this program will spark more interest in the program, as newly recruited Apprentice Hunters will be required to get their FAS certificates to continue hunting beyond one year.

How long is an Apprentice Hunter Validation good for? Only one license year, which runs from March 1st to the end of February. (i.e. If you get the validation in November to go deer hunting, it expires in February, and you will need to get a FAS certificate in order to turkey hunt the following spring.)

How much does it cost? \$3.50

How do I get one? You will be able to purchase the Apprentice Hunter Validation at an ELS vendor. The license code is **199**. You will need to acquire the Validation prior to purchasing any hunting licenses.

What other licenses do I need? You need to purchase and have in possession all licenses and stamps that you would normally be required to possess.

How do I keep hunting after my Apprentice Hunter Validation expires? You will need to complete a Firearms Safety class and get your certification. Youth under age 18 must attend a traditional firearms safety class. Adults may attend a traditional class, an Advanced Hunter Education Seminar, an on-line course or a home-study course. More information is available at www.dnr.state.mn.us. Information about these programs will be sent to all Apprentice Hunters.