



**NOT ALL STATES REQUIRE  
BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR ALL GUN TRANSFERS.**

**AND NOT ALL BACKGROUND  
CHECKS ARE EQUAL.**

Deaths from gun homicides and suicides **decline only**  
**when background checks are part of a purchaser licensing system.**

After Connecticut adopted its **licensing law**, it saw:

**40%**

drop in gun  
homicides

**15%**

drop in gun  
suicides

In contrast, available research examining the impact of background checks without licensing found no reduction in gun homicides or suicides.




**State background check laws generally fall into one of three categories:**

**No background  
check required for  
private transfers**

**Licensed dealers  
process background  
checks for all transfers**

**License required and  
background checks  
for all transfers**

**Virginia, Pennsylvania and Connecticut** are  
representative of these three approaches.

	Weak	Modest	Strong
If a potential buyer goes to purchase a handgun, here are the steps taken within each state's laws:	 Virginia	 Pennsylvania	 Connecticut
Is a background check required for a transfer by licensed dealer?	✓	✓	✓
Is a background check required for a private transfer?	✗	✓ Usually through a licensed dealer	✓ Sellers must require an authorization number from Connecticut State Police
Is the purchaser required to get or provide a license?	✗	✗	✓ The buyer has to obtain or provide an Eligibility Certificate to purchase or a Permit to Carry
Are fingerprints required as part of the background check process?	✗ *	✗	✓ A fingerprint is required to obtain a license
Is the state required to check state mental health records and restraining order data as part of the background check?	✗ *	✓	✓
Does the background check include checking state and local records in addition to the FBI database?	✗ *	✓	✓
Safety Training Requirement	✗	✗	✓ No live fire required
Time	Federally licensed dealers may proceed with the transfer if they have not been notified within three business days that the transfer would violate federal or state laws.*	Sellers may proceed with the transfer if they have not been notified within three business days that the transfer would violate federal or state laws.	It may take up to 90 days for a buyer to obtain an eligibility certificate. The party doing the background check (on the licensed individual) has up to 3 days to complete the background check.
Minimum Age Requirement	18	21	21

\* Virginia does not regulate private transfers

See “The Impact of Handgun Purchaser Licensing on Gun Violence” for additional information.