

Youth Target Practice Now Legal in State

By George Meyer, Executive Director

A little discussed, but extremely important paragraph tucked away in the newly adopted Hunting Mentorship Law authorizes youth under the age of twelve to possess and discharge a firearm for target practice.

Ever since the state's hunter safety education law was enacted in the early 1970s, it has been illegal for anyone under 12 years old to possess or control any firearm unless he or she is enrolled in the hunter safety education and he or she is carrying the firearm in a case or unloaded to or from that class under the supervision of his or her parent or guardian or by a person 18 years old or older designated by his or her parent or guardian or was handling or operating the firearm during the hunter safety class under the supervision of a hunting safety instructor.

This provision prohibited any other type of firearm carry or target practice by anyone less than twelve years old even under the careful supervision of the child's parent or guardian. This prohibition was not widely known and inadvertently violated by many families in the state especially in rural areas.

However the new hunting mentorship law changes this prohibition. The new law provides that a youth under the age of twelve (no limit) may possess and control a firearm in target practice if he or she is accompanied by his or her parent or guardian or by a person at least eighteen years of age who is designated by the parent or guardian. Target practice includes trap shooting or similar sport shooting activity regardless of whether the activity involves shooting at a fixed or moving target.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation worked for several years to get this change made in Wisconsin law. Another great day for hunting and the shooting sports in Wisconsin!