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DEFINITION OF THE TERM “MINOR” UNDER CONNECTICUT LAW

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This report describes how Connecticut law defines the term “minor.”

SUMMARY

Connecticut statutes expressly define the term “minor” at least eight different times. Depending on the purpose for which the definition is being used, a “minor” can mean a person under age 16, 17, 18, or 21. The definition with the widest applicability throughout the statutes classifies a minor as any person under age 18 ([CGS § 1-1d](#)).

That statute also establishes that the “age of majority” in Connecticut is 18, and it considers anyone who reaches this age an adult. Here again, though, the law varies with respect to when someone is considered to be old enough to have a certain responsibility or privilege. For example, an individual (1) must be over age 18 to become a police officer or obtain a gun permit but can be (2) under 18 to obtain a driver’s license.

DEFINITION OF THE TERM “MINOR”

As Table 1 shows, state laws defining the term “minor” have four variations. Depending on the purpose for which the definition is being used, a “minor” can mean a person under age 16, 17, 18, or 21. The definition with the broadest applicability is the one that defines a minor as a person under age 18. Whenever the term is used throughout the statutes this definition applies unless another definition is specified. The other statutory definitions have narrower applications. For example, for

the purpose of (1) responsible gun storage, a minor is anyone under age 16 and (2) the sale and purchase of alcohol, a minor is anyone under age 21. Table 1 summarizes the various definitions of the term “minor” in state law that we found.

TABLE 1: DEFINITION OF “MINOR”

Applicability	Definition
Throughout the statutes unless another definition applies (CGS § 1-1d)	A person under age 18
Specific pregnancy information and counseling required before performance of an abortion (CGS § 19a-600(2))	A person under age 16
Liquor Control Act provisions unless another definition is specified (CGS § 30-1(12))	Any person under age 21
Department of Consumer Protection’s refusal of permits to sell alcoholic liquor (CGS § 30-45)	A person who is a minor, as defined in (1) CGS § 1-1d or (2) CGS § 30-1 (i.e., a person under age 21), whichever age is older
Guardianship of a person (CGS § 45a-604(4)) [1]	A person under age 18
Strict liability for failure to securely store a loaded firearm (CGS § 52-571q)	Any person under age 16
Crime of obscenity as to minors (CGS §§ 53a-193(2)(A) & 53a-196)	Any person under age 17
Crimes of employing or promoting a minor in an obscene performance (CGS §§ 53a-193(2)(A) , 53a-196a , & 53a-196b)	Any person under age 16

[1] This definition also includes the term “minor child”

AGE OF MAJORITY

Another phrase used to describe someone who has reached an age at which certain adult-like privileges and duties accrue is the “age of majority.” Connecticut law establishes this as age 18 and provides that any person who reaches this age “shall be an adult for all purposes whatsoever and have the same legal capacity, rights, powers, privileges, duties, liabilities and responsibilities as persons heretofore had at age 21 years of age” ([CGS § 1-1d](#)).

While [CGS § 1-1d](#) creates the general rule, we found several statutes and one regulation that use different ages. Table 2 summarizes these.

TABLE 2: AGE OF MAJORITY EXCEPTIONS

Age	Privilege	Statute
12	Age starting at which someone may operate a motor boat above 10 horsepower without an accompanying adult	CGS § 15-140h
16	Age at which someone may hunt unaccompanied by an adult	CGS § 26-38
15	Age at which someone may contract for life, health, or accident insurance	CGS § 38a-284
16	Age at which someone may register a motor vehicle (but only with parental consent)	CGS § 14-14
16	Age at which someone may obtain a driver's and motorcycle operator's license	CGS § 14-36
16	Age under which women must receive specific pregnancy information and counseling before obtaining an abortion	CGS § 19a-601
16	Age under which certain restrictions apply on what kind and hours of work someone can be paid for	CGS § 31-23
16	Age of consent for sexual relations (with exceptions)	Various
17	Age at which someone may obtain a license to hunt and fish on public lands	CGS § 26-16
17	Age at which someone may donate blood without parental consent	CGS § 19a-285a
21	Age at which someone may have a gun legally transferred to him or her	CGS § 29-34(b)
21	Age at which someone can obtain an eligibility certificate to possess a handgun	CGS § 29-36f
21	Age at which someone may purchase and consume alcoholic beverages	CGS § 30-1
21	Age at which someone may obtain a gun permit	CGS 29-28(b)(10)
21	Age at which someone may become a police officer	Conn. Agency Regs. § 7-294e-16

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