

Connecticut General Statutes Pertaining to Self Defense and Definitions

Sec. 53a-3. Definitions. Except where different meanings are expressly specified, the following terms have the following meanings when used in this title:

- (1) "Person" means a human being, and, where appropriate, a public or private corporation, a limited liability company, an unincorporated association, a partnership, a government or a governmental instrumentality;
- (2) "Possess" means to have physical possession or otherwise to exercise dominion or control over tangible property;
- (3) "Physical injury" means impairment of physical condition or pain;
- (4) "Serious physical injury" means physical injury which creates a substantial risk of death, or which causes serious disfigurement, serious impairment of health or serious loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ;
- (5) "Deadly physical force" means physical force which can be reasonably expected to cause death or serious physical injury;
- (6) "Deadly weapon" means any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon, or metal knuckles. The definition of "deadly weapon" in this subdivision shall be deemed not to apply to section 29-38 or 53-206;
- (7) "Dangerous instrument" means any instrument, article or substance which, under the circumstances in which it is used or attempted or threatened to be used, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury, and includes a "vehicle" as that term is defined in this section and includes a dog that has been commanded to attack, except a dog owned by a law enforcement agency of the state or any political subdivision thereof or of the federal government when such dog is in the performance of its duties under the direct supervision, care and control of an assigned law enforcement officer;
- (8) "Vehicle" means a "motor vehicle" as defined in section 14-1, a snowmobile, any aircraft, or any vessel equipped for propulsion by mechanical means or sail;
- (9) "Peace officer" means a member of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection or an organized local police department, a chief inspector or inspector in the Division of Criminal Justice, a state marshal while exercising authority granted under any provision of the general statutes, a judicial marshal in the performance of the duties of a judicial marshal, a conservation officer or special conservation officer, as defined in section 26-5, a constable who performs criminal law enforcement duties, a special policeman appointed under section 29-18, 29-18a or 29-19, an adult probation officer, an official of the Department of Correction authorized by the Commissioner of Correction to make arrests in a correctional institution or facility, any investigator in the investigations unit of the office of the State Treasurer, any special agent of the federal government authorized to enforce the provisions of Title 21 of the United States Code, or a member of a law enforcement unit of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe or the Mohegan Tribe of Indians of Connecticut created and governed

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by a memorandum of agreement under section 47-65c who is certified as a police officer by the Police Officer Standards and Training Council pursuant to sections 7-294a to 7-294e, inclusive;

(10) "Firefighter" means any agent of a municipality whose duty it is to protect life and property therein as a member of a duly constituted fire department whether professional or volunteer;

(11) A person acts "intentionally" with respect to a result or to conduct described by a statute defining an offense when his conscious objective is to cause such result or to engage in such conduct;

(12) A person acts "knowingly" with respect to conduct or to a circumstance described by a statute defining an offense when he is aware that his conduct is of such nature or that such circumstance exists;

(13) A person acts "recklessly" with respect to a result or to a circumstance described by a statute defining an offense when he is aware of and consciously disregards a substantial and unjustifiable risk that such result will occur or that such circumstance exists. The risk must be of such nature and degree that disregarding it constitutes a gross deviation from the standard of conduct that a reasonable person would observe in the situation;

(14) A person acts with "criminal negligence" with respect to a result or to a circumstance described by a statute defining an offense when he fails to perceive a substantial and unjustifiable risk that such result will occur or that such circumstance exists. The risk must be of such nature and degree that the failure to perceive it constitutes a gross deviation from the standard of care that a reasonable person would observe in the situation;

(15) "Machine gun" means a weapon of any description, irrespective of size, by whatever name known, loaded or unloaded, from which a number of shots or bullets may be rapidly or automatically discharged from a magazine with one continuous pull of the trigger and includes a submachine gun;

(16) "Rifle" means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed metallic cartridge to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger;

(17) "Shotgun" means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed shotgun shell to fire through a smooth bore either a number of ball shot or a single projectile for each single pull of the trigger;

(18) "Pistol" or "revolver" means any firearm having a barrel less than twelve inches;

(19) "Firearm" means any sawed-off shotgun, machine gun, rifle, shotgun, pistol, revolver or other weapon, whether loaded or unloaded from which a shot may be discharged;

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(20) “Electronic defense weapon” means a weapon which by electronic impulse or current is capable of immobilizing a person temporarily, but is not capable of inflicting death or serious physical injury, including a stun gun or other conductive energy device;

(21) “Martial arts weapon” means a nunchaku, kama, kasari-fundo, octagon sai, tonfa or chinese star;

(22) “Employee of an emergency medical service organization” means an ambulance driver, emergency medical technician or paramedic as defined in section 19a-175;

(23) “Railroad property” means all tangible property owned, leased or operated by a railroad carrier including, but not limited to, a right-of-way, track, roadbed, bridge, yard, shop, station, tunnel, viaduct, trestle, depot, warehouse, terminal or any other structure or appurtenance or equipment owned, leased or used in the operation of a railroad carrier including a train, locomotive, engine, railroad car, signals or safety device or work equipment or rolling stock.

Sec. 53a-6. Effect of ignorance or mistake. (a) A person shall not be relieved of criminal liability for conduct because he engages in such conduct under a mistaken belief of fact, unless: (1) Such factual mistake negates the mental state required for the commission of an offense; or (2) the statute defining the offense or a statute related thereto expressly provides that such factual mistake constitutes a defense or exemption; or (3) such factual mistake is of a kind that supports a defense of justification.

(b) A person shall not be relieved of criminal liability for conduct because he engages in such conduct under a mistaken belief that it does not, as a matter of law, constitute an offense, unless (1) the law provides that the state of mind established by such mistaken belief constitutes a defense, or unless (2) such mistaken belief is founded upon an official statement of law contained in a statute or other enactment, an administrative order or grant of permission, a judicial decision of a state or federal court, or an interpretation of the statute or law relating to the offense, officially made or issued by a public servant, agency or body legally charged or empowered with the responsibility or privilege of administering, enforcing or interpreting such statute or law.

Sec. 53a-7. Effect of intoxication. Intoxication shall not be a defense to a criminal charge, but in any prosecution for an offense evidence of intoxication of the defendant may be offered by the defendant whenever it is relevant to negate an element of the crime charged, provided when recklessness or criminal negligence is an element of the crime charged, if the actor, due to self-induced intoxication, is unaware of or disregards or fails to perceive a risk which he would have been aware of had he not been intoxicated, such unawareness, disregard or failure to perceive shall be immaterial. As used in this section, “intoxication” means a substantial disturbance of mental or physical capacities resulting from the introduction of substances into the body.

Sec. 53a-8. Criminal liability for acts of another. (a) A person, acting with the mental state required for commission of an offense, who solicits, requests, commands, importunes or intentionally aids another person to engage in conduct which constitutes an offense shall be criminally liable for such conduct and may be prosecuted and punished as if he were the principal offender.

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(b) A person who sells, delivers or provides any firearm, as defined in subdivision (19) of section 53a-3, to another person to engage in conduct which constitutes an offense knowing or under circumstances in which he should know that such other person intends to use such firearm in such conduct shall be criminally liable for such conduct and shall be prosecuted and punished as if he were the principal offender.

Sec. 53a-9. Lack of criminal responsibility; absence of prosecution or conviction not a defense. In any prosecution for an offense in which the criminal liability of the defendant is based upon the conduct of another person under section 53a-8 it shall not be a defense that: (1) Such other person is not guilty of the offense in question because of lack of criminal responsibility or legal capacity or awareness of the criminal nature of the conduct in question or of the defendant's criminal purpose or because of other factors precluding the mental state required for the commission of the offense in question; or (2) such other person has not been prosecuted for or convicted of any offense based upon the conduct in question, or has been acquitted thereof, or has legal immunity from prosecution therefor; or (3) the offense in question, as defined, can be committed only by a particular class or classes of persons, and the defendant, not belonging to such class or classes, is for that reason legally incapable of committing the offense in an individual capacity.

Sec. 53a-18. Use of reasonable physical force or deadly physical force generally. The use of physical force upon another person which would otherwise constitute an offense is justifiable and not criminal under any of the following circumstances:

(1) A parent, guardian or other person entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor or an incompetent person, except a person entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor for school purposes as described in subdivision (6) of this section, may use reasonable physical force upon such minor or incompetent person when and to the extent that he reasonably believes such to be necessary to maintain discipline or to promote the welfare of such minor or incompetent person.

(2) An authorized official of a correctional institution or facility may, in order to maintain order and discipline, use such physical force as is reasonable and authorized by the rules and regulations of the Department of Correction.

(3) A person responsible for the maintenance of order in a common carrier of passengers, or a person acting under his direction, may use reasonable physical force when and to the extent that he reasonably believes such to be necessary to maintain order, but he may use deadly physical force only when he reasonably believes such to be necessary to prevent death or serious physical injury.

(4) A person acting under a reasonable belief that another person is about to commit suicide or to inflict serious physical injury upon himself may use reasonable physical force upon such person to the extent that he reasonably believes such to be necessary to thwart such result.

(5) A duly licensed physician or psychologist, or a person acting under his direction, may use reasonable physical force for the purpose of administering a recognized form of treatment which he reasonably believes to be adapted to promoting the physical or mental health of the patient, provided the

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treatment (A) is administered with the consent of the patient or, if the patient is a minor or an incompetent person, with the consent of his parent, guardian or other person entrusted with his care and supervision, or (B) is administered in an emergency when the physician or psychologist reasonably believes that no one competent to consent can be consulted and that a reasonable person, wishing to safeguard the welfare of the patient, would consent.

(6) A teacher or other person entrusted with the care and supervision of a minor for school purposes may use reasonable physical force upon such minor when and to the extent he reasonably believes such to be necessary to (A) protect himself or others from immediate physical injury, (B) obtain possession of a dangerous instrument or controlled substance, as defined in subdivision (9) of section 21a-240, upon or within the control of such minor, (C) protect property from physical damage or (D) restrain such minor or remove such minor to another area, to maintain order.

Sec. 53a-19. Use of physical force in defense of person. (a) Except as provided in subsections (b) and (c) of this section, a person is justified in using reasonable physical force upon another person to defend himself or a third person from what he reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of physical force, and he may use such degree of force which he reasonably believes to be necessary for such purpose; except that deadly physical force may not be used unless the actor reasonably believes that such other person is (1) using or about to use deadly physical force, or (2) inflicting or about to inflict great bodily harm.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, a person is not justified in using deadly physical force upon another person if he or she knows that he or she can avoid the necessity of using such force with complete safety (1) by retreating, except that the actor shall not be required to retreat if he or she is in his or her dwelling, as defined in section 53a-100, or place of work and was not the initial aggressor, or if he or she is a peace officer, a special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, or a motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d, or a private person assisting such peace officer, special policeman or motor vehicle inspector at his or her direction, and acting pursuant to section 53a-22, or (2) by surrendering possession of property to a person asserting a claim of right thereto, or (3) by complying with a demand that he or she abstain from performing an act which he or she is not obliged to perform.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, a person is not justified in using physical force when (1) with intent to cause physical injury or death to another person, he provokes the use of physical force by such other person, or (2) he is the initial aggressor, except that his use of physical force upon another person under such circumstances is justifiable if he withdraws from the encounter and effectively communicates to such other person his intent to do so, but such other person notwithstanding continues or threatens the use of physical force, or (3) the physical force involved was the product of a combat by agreement not specifically authorized by law.

Sec. 53a-20. Use of physical force in defense of premises. A person in possession or control of premises, or a person who is licensed or privileged to be in or upon such premises, is justified in using reasonable physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he reasonably believes such

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to be necessary to prevent or terminate the commission or attempted commission of a criminal trespass by such other person in or upon such premises; but he may use deadly physical force under such circumstances only (1) in defense of a person as prescribed in section 53a-19, or (2) when he reasonably believes such to be necessary to prevent an attempt by the trespasser to commit arson or any crime of violence, or (3) to the extent that he reasonably believes such to be necessary to prevent or terminate an unlawful entry by force into his dwelling as defined in section 53a-100, or place of work, and for the sole purpose of such prevention or termination.

Sec. 53a-21. Use of physical force in defense of property. A person is justified in using reasonable physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he reasonably believes such to be necessary to prevent an attempt by such other person to commit larceny or criminal mischief involving property, or when and to the extent he reasonably believes such to be necessary to regain property which he reasonably believes to have been acquired by larceny within a reasonable time prior to the use of such force; but he may use deadly physical force under such circumstances only in defense of person as prescribed in section 53a-19.

Sec. 53a-22. Use of physical force in making arrest or preventing escape. (a) For purposes of this section, a reasonable belief that a person has committed an offense means a reasonable belief in facts or circumstances which if true would in law constitute an offense. If the believed facts or circumstances would not in law constitute an offense, an erroneous though not unreasonable belief that the law is otherwise does not render justifiable the use of physical force to make an arrest or to prevent an escape from custody. A peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles who is effecting an arrest pursuant to a warrant or preventing an escape from custody is justified in using the physical force prescribed in subsections (b) and (c) of this section unless such warrant is invalid and is known by such officer to be invalid.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (a) of this section, a peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles is justified in using physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to: (1) Effect an arrest or prevent the escape from custody of a person whom he or she reasonably believes to have committed an offense, unless he or she knows that the arrest or custody is unauthorized; or (2) defend himself or herself or a third person from the use or imminent use of physical force while effecting or attempting to effect an arrest or while preventing or attempting to prevent an escape.

(c) A peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles is justified in using deadly physical force upon another person for the purposes specified in subsection (b) of this section only when he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to: (1) Defend himself or herself or a third person from the use

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or imminent use of deadly physical force; or (2) effect an arrest or prevent the escape from custody of a person whom he or she reasonably believes has committed or attempted to commit a felony which involved the infliction or threatened infliction of serious physical injury and if, where feasible, he or she has given warning of his or her intent to use deadly physical force.

(d) Except as provided in subsection (e) of this section, a person who has been directed by a peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles to assist such peace officer, special policeman, motor vehicle inspector or official to effect an arrest or to prevent an escape from custody is justified in using reasonable physical force when and to the extent that he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to carry out such peace officer's, special policeman's, motor vehicle inspector's or official's direction.

(e) A person who has been directed to assist a peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b, motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d or authorized official of the Department of Correction or the Board of Pardons and Paroles under circumstances specified in subsection (d) of this section may use deadly physical force to effect an arrest or to prevent an escape from custody only when: (1) He or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to defend himself or herself or a third person from what he or she reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of deadly physical force; or (2) he or she is directed or authorized by such peace officer, special policeman, motor vehicle inspector or official to use deadly physical force, unless he or she knows that the peace officer, special policeman, motor vehicle inspector or official himself or herself is not authorized to use deadly physical force under the circumstances.

(f) A private person acting on his or her own account is justified in using reasonable physical force upon another person when and to the extent that he or she reasonably believes such to be necessary to effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of an arrested person whom he or she reasonably believes to have committed an offense and who in fact has committed such offense; but he or she is not justified in using deadly physical force in such circumstances, except in defense of person as prescribed in section 53a-19.

Sec. 53a-23. Use of physical force to resist arrest not justified. A person is not justified in using physical force to resist an arrest by a reasonably identifiable peace officer, special policeman appointed under section 29-18b or motor vehicle inspector designated under section 14-8 and certified pursuant to section 7-294d, whether such arrest is legal or illegal.