

LOUISIANA HUNTING HERITAGE PROGRAM (LHHP)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - MENTORS



1. What is the LHHP?

The LHHP is a new program that connects experienced hunters (mentors) to new hunters (apprentices) with the goal of providing the apprentices with the skills and confidence to become independent hunters. In the past, most hunters learned their basic hunting skills from family. However, with changes in family structure and declining numbers of hunters, many people who may have an interest in hunting lack the support network to get started. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) developed the LHHP to establish a network of volunteer mentors and link them with apprentice hunters.

2. What is the LDWF's role?

LDWF's role is to organize the program and connect apprentices with mentors. LDWF will screen and train mentor applicants and screen apprentice applicants. LDWF will also work with mentors to provide workshops or other events that will assist them in their role as mentors.

3. What is my role as an LHHP mentor?

The mentor's role is to help the apprentice gain the skills and confidence they need to become an independent hunter. When the apprenticeship ends, the apprentice is not expected to be a highly skilled hunter, but they should have the basic skills necessary to hunt safely and responsibly. The activities a mentor and apprentice will engage in will vary with each apprentice and their skill level. Recommended activities that a mentor can aid the apprentice with are as follows:

- a. attending a hunter education class;
- b. practicing with their hunting equipment;
- c. learning how to scout, locate and recognize game sign;
- d. learning basic hunting skills;
- e. understanding the hunting regulations;
- f. learning about where they can hunt;
- g. cleaning game;
- h. selecting equipment; and
- i. participating in actual hunts.

A mentor is not expected to take their apprentice hunting each time they go, but should take the apprentice hunting several times during the season. Similarly, as the apprentice gains skill and confidence, he/she should be encouraged to hunt without the mentor if they can do so comfortably and safely. As the apprentice's hunting skills develop, the role of the mentor may become that of an advisor and source of information.

4. Who can be a mentor?

Any experienced hunter who is 18 years or older may apply to be a mentor. Mentor applicants must undergo a background check and provide personal references. LDWF will screen and select mentors similar to the way volunteer hunter education instructors are selected.

5. Who can be an apprentice?

Any person who is 10 years or older can be an apprentice. Apprentices may be youth, young adults, seniors, men or women. Any responsible person with an interest in hunting, but lacking a support network of hunters is eligible.

6. How will an apprentice be paired with a mentor?

Pairing will be based on a number of factors such as location, type of hunting the mentor and apprentice have an interest in, age of the apprentice, etc. Mentors can specify what type of hunting they do and if they are interested in mentoring an adult or youth.

7. What if my apprentice and I are not compatible?

Every effort will be made to make sure mentors and apprentices are compatible. However, there will be instances where the pairing does not work. In those cases, LDWF will work to pair the apprentice with another mentor unless there is a reason the apprentice should be removed from the program.

8. How long will the mentor / apprentice relationship last?

There is a maximum of 5 years for an apprentice to be enrolled in the LHHP, but there is no requirement that the mentor and apprentice remain together that entire time. Each year the mentor and apprentice will be asked to complete an evaluation. If the mentor believes the apprentice has gained the skills to become an independent hunter, the apprentice will “graduate” from the program. The length of the apprenticeship will vary depending on the age and skills of the apprentice, the amount of activity the mentor and apprentice are involved in, and the compatibility of the mentor and apprentice. It is likely that young hunters will benefit from a longer apprenticeship than adult participants. Either the mentor or the apprentice may end their partnership before the 5-year maximum.

9. What is my liability as a mentor?

Mentors accepted into the LHHP will be covered by the department’s insurance when engaged in activities within the scope of the LHHP. This is similar to the coverage provided for volunteer hunter education instructors when teaching hunter education. Apprentices or their legal guardians will be required to sign a liability release in order to be accepted into the LHHP. In the case of youth, the parent or guardian will be required to approve the mentor

assignment and will be encouraged to participate in activities with the youth. Mentors working with youth are encouraged to do so in a group setting with a mentor partner or another youth hunter.

10. How do I become an LHHP mentor?

The first step is to complete the LHHP mentor application and questionnaire. Mentor applicants will have to undergo a criminal background check and provide personal references. Then mentors will need to attend a brief training/informational meeting. Every effort will be made to make the training/information meetings as convenient as possible for mentors.

11. What's in it for me?

Program incentives are made available to mentors. The main reward is the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped secure the future of hunting and granted another person the opportunity to experience wildlife and the outdoors as only a hunter can. Hopefully, you'll also gain a new friend or hunting partner.