

Pennsylvania Marriage Officiant Guide

Marriage Officiants: Ministers of any church organized, carrying on its work, and having congregations in Pennsylvania may perform marriage ceremonies anywhere in the state if authorized by their church to do so. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and any clerk or official of any county, city or town in the Commonwealth, *will not* determine who is recognized as an Officiant to solemnize a marriage, and also *cannot and will not* recommend an Officiant. Pennsylvania Marriage Law (*Title 23 Pa.C.S. §1503*) designates those qualified to officiate a marriage ceremony in Pennsylvania; however, it is the bridal couple's responsibility to arrange the ceremony and ensure the validity of the Officiant's credentials. *No agency in Pennsylvania will confirm or deny a particular person's qualification to officiate a marriage ceremony.* Officiants must provide the bridal couple with a marriage certificate upon request. Also, the Officiant must return the marriage certificate to the clerk's office that issued the marriage license within one month after the marriage ceremony.

MARRIAGE LICENSE INFORMATION

Much of the information below is state law in Pennsylvania; however, this information can vary by location, and is subject to change. We recommend contacting your county clerk's office before applying for your marriage license.

ID Requirement: Driver's license and Social Security number.

Residency Requirement: The parties to the marriage do not have to reside in Pennsylvania.

If previously married: Applicants who have been previously married must provide the following information concerning the dissolution of the most recent marriage:

- Divorces: Must present decree. If maiden name has been resumed or reinstated, you must present that document as proof.
- Annulments: The same information as required for divorces.
- Widowed: The date of death of the deceased spouse.



Application Requirement: Both parties to a marriage should appear in person to obtain their marriage license.

Proxy Marriages: Not permitted. Both parties to the marriage must be present.

Fees: Varies depending on the county or agency that is issuing the marriage license. Generally, the fee is about \$80 in most counties (\$90 in Philadelphia), payable by cash or money order; checks and credit cards are not accepted. There are no exceptions or waivers to the license fee. No extensions or refunds are made once the license is issued.

Waiting Period: There is a three-day waiting period from the day the license is issued until it can be used.

Blood Tests: No test is required.

Under 18: Legal age for marriage in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for both parties to the marriage is 18. If under 18 years of age, applicants may marry with consent of a parent or guardian. Applicants must present birth certificate plus an additional \$5 fee.

If under 16 years of age: Only with the approval of a Judge of the Orphans Court, as well as parent or guardian.

Marriage Ceremony: Marriage ceremonies may be performed by the following:

- Judges;
- Justices of Peace;
- County Clerks or their Deputies within appointing county; and
- Persons appointed to perform the ceremony by a congregation having regular meetings in the state (i.e., ministers, pastors, priests, rabbis).

Common Law Marriage: Not permitted.

Cousin Marriage: Not permitted.

Same-Gender Marriage: Permitted.

Valid: *A Pennsylvania marriage license is valid for 60 days.* The marriage license can only be used within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

For additional information, please visit FirstNationMinistry.org/us/pennsylvania

The above information is believed to be current and correct, but does not purport to be legal advice, is not all-inclusive and shall be used only as a guide. Under the terms specified in your ordination, you are solely responsible for becoming familiar with and complying to all current laws and regulations in effect within the jurisdiction in which you will conduct ceremonies.

Pennsylvania Marriage Law, Title 23 Pa.C.S.

§ 1503. Persons qualified to solemnize marriages.

(a) General rule. The following are authorized to solemnize marriages between persons that produce a marriage license issued under this part: (1) A justice, judge or magisterial district judge of this Commonwealth. (2) A former or retired justice, judge or magisterial district judge of this Commonwealth who is serving as a senior judge or senior magisterial district judge as provided or prescribed by law; or not serving as a senior judge or senior magisterial district judge but meets the following criteria: (i) has served as a magisterial district judge, judge or justice, whether or not continuously or on the same court, by election or appointment for an aggregate period equaling a full term of office; (ii) has not been defeated for reelection or retention; (iii) has not been convicted of, pleaded nolo contendere to or agreed to an Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition or other probation without verdict program relative to any misdemeanor or felony offense under the laws of this Commonwealth or an equivalent offense under the laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation; (iv) has not resigned a judicial commission to avoid having charges filed or to avoid prosecution by Federal, State or local law enforcement agencies or by the Judicial Conduct Board; (v) has not been removed from office by the Court of Judicial Discipline; and (vi) is a resident of this Commonwealth. (3) An active or senior judge or full-time magistrate of the District Courts of the United States for the Eastern, Middle or Western District of Pennsylvania. (3.1) An active, retired or senior bankruptcy judge of the United States Bankruptcy Courts for the Eastern, Middle or Western District of Pennsylvania who is a resident of this Commonwealth. (4) An active, retired or senior judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit who is a resident of this Commonwealth. (5) A mayor of any city or borough of this Commonwealth. (5.1) A former mayor of a city or borough of this Commonwealth who: (i) has not been defeated for reelection; (ii) has not been convicted of, pleaded nolo contendere to or agreed to an Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition or other probation without verdict program relative to a misdemeanor or felony offense under the laws of this Commonwealth or an equivalent offense under the laws of the United States or any one of its possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation; (iii) has not resigned the position of mayor to avoid having charges filed or to avoid prosecution by Federal, State or local law enforcement agencies; (iv) has served as a mayor, whether continuously or not, by election for an aggregate of a full term in office; and (v) is a resident of this Commonwealth. **(6) A minister, priest or rabbi of any regularly established church or congregation.**

(b) Religious organizations. Every religious society, religious institution or religious organization in this Commonwealth may join persons together in marriage when at least one of the persons is a member of the society, institution or organization, according to the rules and customs of the society, institution or organization.

(c) Marriage license needed to officiate. No person or religious organization qualified to perform marriages shall officiate at a marriage ceremony without the parties having obtained a marriage license issued under this part.

(June 22, 2000, P.L.443, No.59, eff. imd.; Nov. 30, 2004, P.L.1618, No.207, eff. 60 days; Dec. 1, 2004, P.L.1777, No.232, eff. 60 days; July 14, 2009, P.L.81, No.18, eff. imd.)