

Rhode Island Marriage Officiant Guide

Officiants: Anyone who is the minister in good standing of any society professing to meet for religious purposes, or incorporated for the promotion of such purposes, and holding stated and regular services, and who has been ordained according to the customs and usages of such society may perform marriages. **The Officiant must endorse and return the completed marriage license within 72 hours (three business days) to the town or city clerk in which the wedding ceremony was performed.**

Solemnization of Marriage: Solemnization of the marriage shall be conducted in the presence of at least two witnesses who have reached the age of majority, in addition to the Officiant, at the ceremony.

MARRIAGE LICENSE INFORMATION

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

ID Requirement: Proof of birth facts should be supplied, preferably certified copies of the birth certificates of the parties to the marriage. For persons born outside the United States who cannot obtain a birth record, a passport or alien card is acceptable.

Residency Requirement: None. However, the marriage license must be obtained from the City or Town Clerk of the bride's residence, if the bride is a Rhode Island resident. If the bride is not a resident of Rhode Island, but the groom is, the license must be obtained from the City or Town Clerk of the groom's residence. In either case, the marriage license is valid in any city or town in Rhode Island and the couple may be married anywhere in Rhode Island.

If neither the party to the marriage is a resident of Rhode Island, the marriage license must be obtained at the City or Town Clerk's Office where the ceremony is to take place. This is because Rhode Island law states that the marriage license is valid only in the city or town in which it was issued. If the marriage ceremony is performed in a city or town other than the city or town of issuance, the validity of the marriage record may be in question. Item 15c on the marriage license lists the location where the marriage license is valid.

If Previously Married: If either applicant has been married previously and that marriage ended in divorce, such applicant must present a certified copy of final decree of divorce to the City or Town Clerk. **NOTE:** If either applicant has been married previously and that marriage ended in death, a certified copy of the death record should be presented to the City or Town Clerk.

Application Requirement: Both parties to the marriage, personally, must sign the marriage license in the presence of the City or Town Clerk or his/her assistant, attesting to the truth of the information listed thereon. No information on the marriage license may be changed by the parties to the marriage after the license is issued. If any information is in error, the parties to the marriage must contact the state registrar after the marriage record has been filed.

Marriage License Fee: \$24 — Cash Only.

Waiting Period: None. The license may be used immediately

Blood Tests: No tests required.

Under 18: A Minor's Permit to marry (VS10) must be completed if a female applicant is 16 or 17 years of age. The permit must be signed and notarized in the presence of the City or Town Clerk or any clerk employed in that office. If this is not possible, contact the State Office of Vital Records for instructions.

- A female under age 16 and a male under age 18 cannot secure a marriage license in the State of Rhode Island without the approval of the Family Court.
- Applicants must be 18 or older to obtain a marriage license.

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

Common Law Marriage: Not permitted.

Same-Gender Marriage: Permitted. As of August 1, 2013, same-gender marriage is legal in Rhode Island. Also, as of that date, Rhode Island no longer allows couples to enter into a civil union. Any person who otherwise meets the marriage eligibility requirements of R.I.G.L. Chapters 15-1 and 15-2 may marry any other marriage-eligible person.

Cousin Marriage: Permitted under specific circumstances. For example, a man cannot marry his aunt, but can marry his cousin. A woman may marry her uncle, provided that she is Jewish.

Valid: **A Rhode Island marriage license is valid for 90 days.** The marriage license can only be solemnized within the State of Rhode Island.

For additional information, please visit FirstNationMinistry.org

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.

State of Rhode Island General Law

TITLE 15 Domestic Relations

CHAPTER 15-3 Solemnization of Marriages

SECTION 15-3-5

§ 15-3-5 Officials empowered to join persons in marriage.

Every ordained clergy or elder in good standing; every justice of the supreme court, superior court, family court, workers' compensation court, district court or traffic tribunal; the clerk of the supreme court; every clerk, administrative clerk, or general chief clerk of a superior court, family court, district court, or traffic tribunal; magistrates, special or general magistrates of the superior court, family court, traffic tribunal or district court; administrative clerks of the district court; administrators of the workers' compensation court; every former justice or judge and former administrator of these courts; every former chief clerk of the district court; every former clerk, administrative clerk, or general chief clerk of a superior court; the secretary of the senate; elected clerks of the general assembly; any former secretary of the senate; any former elected clerk of the general assembly who retires after July 1, 2007; judges of the United States appointed pursuant to Article III of the United States Constitution; bankruptcy judges appointed pursuant to Article I of the United States Constitution; and United States magistrate judges appointed pursuant to federal law, may join persons in marriage in any city or town in this state; and every justice and every former justice of the municipal courts of the cities and towns in this state and of the police court of the town of Johnston and the administrator of the Johnston municipal court, while he or she is serving as an administrator, and every probate judge and every former probate judge may join persons in marriage in any city or town in this state, and wardens of the town of New Shoreham may join persons in marriage in New Shoreham.

History of Section.

(G.L. 1896, ch. 191, § 8; C.P.A. 1905, § 1228; G.L. 1909, ch. 243, § 8; P.L. 1922, ch. 2207, § 1; G.L. 1923, ch. 287, § 8; P.L. 1932, ch. 1896, § 1; P.L. 1933, ch. 2042, § 1; G.L. 1938, ch. 415, § 8; P.L. 1949, ch. 2290, § 1; G.L. 1956, § 15-3-5; P.L. 1974, ch. 290, § 1; P.L. 1978, ch. 326, § 1; P.L. 1979, ch. 327, § 1; P.L. 1980, ch. 382, § 1; P.L. 1981, ch. 363, § 2; P.L. 1987, ch. 489, § 1; P.L. 1988, ch. 561, § 1; P.L. 1988, ch. 607, § 1; P.L. 1990, ch. 139, § 1; P.L. 1990, ch. 163, § 1; P.L. 1991, ch. 132, § 5; P.L. 1991, ch. 205, § 4; P.L. 1994, ch. 103, § 1; P.L. 1994, ch. 199, § 1; P.L. 1994, ch. 249, § 1; P.L. 1998, ch. 451, § 1; P.L. 2002, ch. 70, § 1; P.L. 2002, ch. 123, § 1; P.L. 2004, ch. 6, § 42; P.L. 2004, ch. 444, § 1; P.L. 2007, ch. 174, § 1; P.L. 2007, ch. 259, § 1; P.L. 2008, ch. 85, § 1; P.L. 2008, ch. 89, § 1; P.L. 2013, ch. 321, § 1; P.L. 2013, ch. 351, § 1; P.L. 2014, ch. 484, § 1; P.L. 2014, ch. 512, § 1.)



GENERAL MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

**Rhode Island Department of Health
Center for Vital Records
6 Harrington Road
Cranston, RI 02920**

**(401) 222-5960
www.health.ri.gov**

How can I get a marriage license in Rhode Island?

Both people getting married must apply for a marriage license in person at the city or town clerk's office before the wedding ceremony. Both people must complete a marriage worksheet and provide the required documentation. The clerk will create a marriage license. Then both people must sign the marriage worksheet and the marriage license in the presence of the city or town clerk.

A marriage license costs \$24. A check should be made payable to the city or town that issued the marriage.

Which City or Town Hall will issue the marriage license?

The City or Town Hall that issues the marriage license depends on where the people getting married live.

- Both people live in Rhode Island: Apply for a marriage license at the clerk's office in the city or town where either person lives. The marriage ceremony can take place in any city or town in Rhode Island.
- One person lives in Rhode Island: Apply for a marriage license at the clerk's office in the city or town where the Rhode Islander lives. The marriage ceremony can take place in any city or town in Rhode Island.
- If neither person lives in Rhode Island: Apply for a marriage license in the clerk's office in the city or town where the marriage ceremony will take place.

A [list of address and contact information](#) for Rhode Island cities and towns is available online.

What documents do I need to have so I can get a marriage license?

Both people getting married must have these documents with them when they apply for a marriage license:

- Proof of birth facts: A long form, certified copy of birth certificate is preferred.
 - Anyone born in another country may need to provide a certified translation of the birth certificate if the certificate is not in English.
 - A passport cannot be used for proof of birth facts.
- Valid, government-issued photo ID (valid driver's license, passport)
 - If your current address is not on the photo ID, you must show proof of your current address (utility bill, car registration, tax return from previous year).
- **Proof that previous marriage(s), civil union(s), or registered domestic partnership(s) have ended.**
 - If either person has been married, civilly united, common-law married, or registered in a domestic partnership before and the union has ended, the person must show a certified copy of the final decree of divorce or dissolution or a certified copy of a death certificate to the city or town clerk.
- **Accurate Information**
 - Any person who willfully and knowingly supplies false information intending that the information be used in the preparation of a marriage license shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than one year, or both, pursuant to Section 23-3-28 of the RI General Laws.

Anyone applying for a marriage license should contact the city or town clerk's office to verify documentation requirements, hours of operation, or questions concerning obtaining a marriage license.

Who may perform the marriage ceremony?

According to RIGL 15-3-5*, the following people can perform a marriage ceremony in Rhode Island:

- All ordained clergy and ministers, including those from non-denominational religious groups or online ministries;
- Rhode Island civil servants;
- Rhode Islanders authorized by the General Assembly or the Secretary of State;
- Federal judges; and
- Individuals who have received a Certificate [Authorizing the Solemnization of Marriage from the One-Day Marriage Officiant Certification Program](#) at the Rhode Island Secretary of State.
- Any officiant who is performing a religious ceremony must provide proof that they are in good standing with their ministry before they can perform a valid marriage ceremony. On the marriage license, the officiant must check the box for religious ceremony and specify the name of the religious organization or online ministry that has approved them to perform a marriage ceremony.

Do Officiants have to register with the State of Rhode Island?

Officiants who are in good standing with their ministry are not required to register with any government office before they perform a marriage ceremony.

Can an out-of-state resident perform the marriage ceremony?

If the person meets the requirements in RIGL 15-3-5*, then they can perform the marriage ceremony.

How long is a marriage license valid?

A marriage license is valid for 3 months. The license will include the dates that it is valid, and the ceremony must happen during those dates.

If the people do not get married, the license must be returned to the city or town hall where it was issued.

Who can be a witness to the marriage ceremony?

In addition to the officiant, at least two other people, age 18 or older, must witness the marriage for it to be valid. If the honor attendants are younger than 18, two other witnesses who are older than 18 must be a witness.

What are the responsibilities of the Officiant?

Wedding Officiants must:

- Perform the marriage ceremony;
- Get the witness' signatures and complete the Officiant/Witnesses portion of the marriage license; and
- Return the marriage license to the city or town clerk's office where it was issued within 72 hours of the marriage ceremony.

Detailed directions for the officiant are on the back side of the marriage license.

What is the fee for a Vital Record?

The fee for a certified copy of a Vital Record is as follows:

- Walk-In Requests: \$22.00
Additional copies issued at the same time \$18.00 each
- Mail-In Requests: \$25.00
Additional copies issued at the same time \$18.00 each

All requests for a vital record are to be submitted with a valid government issued photo identification and appropriate fee.

Who can correct/amend information on the marriage certificate?

The city or town clerk's office that issued the marriage license can make minor corrections (typos, misspellings) before the marriage license is filed with the State of Rhode Island. Once the record is filed with the State, any corrections must be made at the State Office of Vital Records.

How can I get an apostille for my marriage certificate?

An apostille is used to authenticate public documents. It certifies the authenticity of the issuing official's or notary public's signature on the document, the capacity in which the person has acted, and identifies the seal or stamp on the document. Apostilles are used when a document is created in one country and must be sent or transmitted to a different country. Apostilles must be issued by the State Office of Vital Records.

For more [information about apostilles](#) visit the Rhode Island Secretary of State's website.

When can the people who got married get a certified copy of the marriage certificate?

After the marriage license is returned and filed at the city or town clerk's office where it was issued, you can request a certified copy of the marriage certificate.

There are three ways to request a copy of a marriage certificate:

In Person Requests:

Complete a marriage application form at one of the following locations:

- Any city or town clerk's office located within the State of Rhode Island.
- RI Dept of Health/ Center for Vital Records. Appointments are recommended but not required.

Mail in Requests:

Please download an application from our website, www.health.ri.gov and mail it to the Center for Vital Records with the appropriate fee and a copy of valid government issued photo identification.

On-line or by Phone Requests:

Vital Chek is a company that issues certified copies of records for births, deaths, or marriages that happened in Rhode Island. Vital Chek is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can be reached at 1-888-388-1032 or <https://www.vitalchek.com/>

General Laws of Rhode Island § 15-3-5:

Officials empowered to join persons in marriage.

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CONTACT US

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Center for Vital Records
6 Harrington Road
Cranston, RI 02920(401) 222-5960
www.health.ri.gov