

# GENERAL MARRIAGE REQUIREMENTS IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND



**Rhode Island Department of Health  
Center for Vital Records  
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[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)**

## ***How to obtain a marriage license in Rhode Island?***

Couples marrying in Rhode Island must apply for a license in the city or town clerk's office.

### ***Residents of RI***

- **If both applicants live in Rhode Island, they may** apply for the license from the city/town clerk's office, of the residence of either applicant.
- **If only one applicant lives in Rhode Island, then they may** apply for the license from the city/town clerk's office of the residence of that applicant.
- The marriage license is valid in any city or town in Rhode Island; the couple may be married anywhere in Rhode Island.

### ***NON-Residents of RI***

- **If neither applicant lives in Rhode Island,** the marriage license must be obtained at the city or town clerk's office WHERE THE CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE. RI 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 may be in question.

Please be sure to contact the city or town where you apply for the license to verify requirements and hours open to the public. *For a list of city and town offices, please visit the RI Department of Health web site: [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)*

## ***What documents are required?***

To obtain a marriage license, both parties must apply for the license in person at the city or town clerk's office. The couple is required to complete the marriage worksheet and provide the required documentation. The clerk will then create the marriage license from the information provided. Both parties are required to sign both the worksheet and the marriage license in the presence of the city or town clerk. The fee for the marriage license is currently \$24.00 payable to the city or town.

### **Both applicants must supply:**

#### ***1. Proof of Birth Facts and Identification***

- Proof of birth facts, preferably a long-form certified copy of birth certificate. A passport or alien card may be accepted for persons born outside the United States who cannot obtain a birth record.
- A valid government issued form of identification. Some offices will not accept a passport without a certified copy of a birth certificate.
- Contact the city or town office where you will apply for the license to verify the requirements and the hours of operation.

#### ***2. Permit to Marry for Minors and Persons Under Legal Guardianship***

- A Permit to Marry (VS 10) must be completed if either applicant is 16 or 17 years of age or under control of a legal guardian. The permit should 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, please contact the Center for Vital Records for instructions.
- Applicants under the age of 16 cannot secure a marriage license in the State of Rhode Island without the approval of Family Court.

### 3. Proof That Previous Marriages, Civil Unions or Registered Domestic Partnerships Have Ended

- If either applicant has been previously married, civilly united or in a registered domestic partnership, and the previous marriage, civil union or registered domestic partnership ended in divorce, dissolution or death, such applicant must present a certified copy of the **FINAL** decree of divorce or dissolution, or a certified copy of the death certificate to the city or town clerk.

### 4. 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.

### **When and Where should the ceremony occur?**

- The license is valid for **three (3) months**.
- The marriage license lists the **dates** when the marriage license is valid. The ceremony must occur during that three-month period.
- The marriage license lists the **location** where the marriage license is valid.

**Please note:** If the applicants do not marry, the marriage license must be returned to the city or town office where the license was issued.

### **Who may perform the ceremony?**

- Rhode Island civil servants as defined in RIGL 15-3-5, or those authorized by the Rhode Island General Assembly may perform civil ceremonies
- Rhode Island accepts all ordained clergy and ministers, including those from online ministries. If the officiant provides verification that they are in good standing with their ministry, then they are allowed to perform the ceremony and the marriage is valid.

**\*General Laws of Rhode Island § 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 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 and every former chief clerk of the district court, and every former 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 or 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 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.

### **Responsibilities of the Officiant**

- Perform the ceremony.
- Obtain the signatures of the witnesses and complete the **Officiant/Witnesses portion** on the license in **BLACK ink only**.
- No liquid correction fluid may be used.
- Register the marriage license with the city or town clerk where the license was issued within 72 hours.

**\*\* Please refer to the reverse side of the marriage license for instructions.**

### **Who may be witnesses at the ceremony?**

- In addition to the officiant, the solemnization of marriage shall be in the presence of at least two (2) witnesses who have reached the age of legal majority (18 years of age).
- If the honor attendants are less than 18 years of age, two other witnesses to the ceremony who have reached the age of 18 may sign as witnesses.

### **Who is allowed to correct information on the marriage certificate?**

- Issuing City or Town Clerk's office may make minor corrects prior to filing with the State of Rhode Island.
- Once the record is filed with the State, any corrections will be amended at the Center for Vital Records.
- If any information was presented in error, contact the State Office at 401-222-2812 after the marriage license has been registered.

### **How and When to obtain certified copies of the marriage certificate?**

- Complete a marriage application form at one of the following locations:
  - The city or town clerk's office where the license was issued.
  - The city or town where the ceremony took place.
  - The State Office of Vital Records within a month or download an application from our website, [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov) and mail it to the Center for Vital Records.
- All requests are to be submitted with a valid government issued photo ID
- The fee for a certified copy is as follows:

Walk-In Requests	\$22.00
Additional Copies of the same record	\$18.00 each
Mail-In Requests	\$25.00
Additional Copies of the same record	\$18.00 each

