

# Marriage Requirements In the State of Rhode Island

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

### How To Apply for a Marriage License

*Both* applicants must:

- Apply for the marriage license in person and personally sign the license in the presence of the city or town clerk or his/her assistant, attesting to the truth of the information listed thereon.
- Present proof of birth facts and identification.
- If previously married, civilly united or in a registered domestic partnership, present a certified copy of the **FINAL** decree of divorce (with the seal of the court), dissolution, or death certificate of the previous spouse/partner.
- If under age 18, or under control of a legal guardian, the parent or legal guardian must complete a Minor's Permit to Marry. If either applicant is under the age of 16, court permission to marry is required.
- For a list of city and town offices, use the HEALTH web site [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)

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

## SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

### Where To Apply for a Marriage License

#### ***Residents of R I***

- **If both applicants live in Rhode Island**, apply for the license from the city/town clerk of the city/town residence of either 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.

### Cost of the Marriage License

**\$24.00**

### Who Is Allowed to Correct Information on the Marriage Certificate

- Only the State Office of Vital Records
- If any information is in error, contact the State Office at 401-222-2812 after the marriage license has been registered.

## Responsibilities of the Applicants

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.
- Additional requirements may exist in some locations. For example, some offices require a government-issued picture ID in addition to a certified copy of a birth certificate. 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. A list of city and town offices with phone numbers may be located on the HEALTH website at [www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov) under the Vital Records section.

### 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 Division of 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, disillusion or death, such applicant must present a certified copy of the **FINAL** decree of divorce or disillusion, or a certified copy of the death certificate to the city or town clerk.
- **The couple must give the license to the officiant.**

### 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 the Ceremony Should 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.

## 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 May Perform the Ceremony**

**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 administrative adjudication court, the clerk of the supreme court, every clerk or general chief clerk of a superior court, family court, district court, or administrative adjudication court, magistrates, special or general magistrates of the superior court, family court or 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 may join persons in marriage in any 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 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**. 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.**

### **How and When To Obtain Certified Copies of the Marriage Certificate**

- Complete an application at one of the following locations
  - The city or town clerk's office where the license was issued.
  - The State Office of Vital Records within a month.
  - The city or town where the ceremony took place.
- Pay the fee of \$20.00 for one copy and \$15.00 for additional copies obtained at the same time

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IN THE  
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**Rhode Island Department of Health**

Division of Vital Records  
3 Capitol Hill, Room 101  
Providence, RI 02908-5097  
(401) 222-2812  
[www.health.ri.gov](http://www.health.ri.gov)