

General Marriage Requirements In the State of Rhode Island

Both the bride and groom must apply for the marriage license in person. When applying for the license, the bride and groom must present proof of birth facts (see item 5). If the bride or groom have been previously married, a certified copy of the **FINAL** decree of divorce or the death certificate of the previous spouse must be presented (see item 4). Brides and grooms who are under age 18 or are under the control of a legal guardian, will need a Minor's Permit to Marry (see items 2 and 3).

1. The marriage license must be obtained from one of the following offices:

If the bride is a Rhode Island resident, apply for the license from the city/town clerk for the city/town of the bride's residence;

If the bride is not a Rhode Island resident but the groom is a Rhode Island resident, apply for the license from the city/town clerk for the city/town of the groom's residence;

In either of the above cases, the marriage license is valid in any city or town in Rhode Island; the couple may be married anywhere in Rhode Island.

If BOTH the bride and groom are NOT residents of Rhode Island, the marriage license must be obtained at the city or town clerk's office **WHERE THE CEREMONY IS TO TAKE PLACE**, 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.

2. A Minor's Permit to marry (VS 10) must be completed if a female applicant is 16 or 17 years of age or the bride/groom (regardless of age) is under the 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.

3. A female under age 16 and a male under 18 cannot secure a marriage license in the state of Rhode Island without the approval of the Family Court.

4. If either applicant has been previously married and the previous marriage ended in divorce, such applicant must present a certified copy of the **FINAL** decree of divorce to the city or town clerk. If either applicant has been previously married and the previous marriage ended in death, a certified copy of the death record should be presented to the city or town clerk.

5. Proof of birth facts should be supplied, preferably in the form of a certified copy of the birth certificates of both the bride and the groom. For persons born outside the United States who cannot obtain a birth record, a passport or alien card may be accepted.

6. Both the bride and groom must personally sign the marriage license in the presence of the city or town clerk or his or her assistant, attesting to the truth of the information listed thereon. No information on the marriage license may be changed by the bride or groom after the marriage license is issued. If any information is in error, the bride or groom should contact the Division of Vital Records at (401) 277-2812 after the marriage record has been filed.

7. The fee for a marriage license is twenty-four dollars (\$24.00).

8. The marriage license is valid for three (3) months and, if not used, should be returned to the city or town clerk who issued the license.

9. The solemnization of marriage shall be in the presence of at least two (2) witnesses who have reached the age of majority (see NOTE below), in addition to the officiant at the marriage who may be:

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 of a superior court, family court, district court, or administrative adjudication 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 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. Section 8-4-4.1 of the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island empowers clerks emeritus of the Superior Court to perform marriages in Rhode Island.

NOTE: Witnesses need not be the attendants but may be any persons who have witnessed the ceremony who **HAVE REACHED THE AGE OF LEGAL MAJORITY** (18 years of age).