

Wedding FAQ's

If you've just set a date for your wedding, this can be an exciting time for the two of you! Here is what you need to know and what documents to bring with you before you apply for a NH marriage license. We recommend contacting a NH City Clerk's office to verify this information and suggest that you get this legal aspect of your wedding out of the way at least two months before your wedding date.

Do we need any witnesses present at our ceremony?

No. New Hampshire law does not require that witnesses be present at your ceremony.

Do we need rings?

No. While they are traditional, rings are not required.

Do you allow couples to write their own vows and/or ceremony?

Absolutely. The couple can customize any part of the ceremony they would like or even create the entire ceremony themselves. Our JP custom writes every ceremony after a series of discussions with the couple and present that to the couple for approval, if they do not have something specifically picked out. There are no restrictions as to what can be said or done – it is the couples ceremony and we are there to help them create the day that uniquely represents the couple.

Do we have to speak at the ceremony?

Only if you want to. New Hampshire law provides a lot of latitude in what is, and isn't, required at wedding ceremonies. You can get away with as little as just saying, "I do."

Can others be included in the ceremony?

Definitely. There are many ways to include family members and friends in the ceremony. For example, your loved ones can do readings, walk down the aisle, carry the rings, participate in a candle lighting, and more. There are unlimited possibilities.

Can we include both Christian and Jewish traditions?

Definitely. We can also include any other special traditions you desire, or we can omit any religious reference.

What happens after the ceremony?

After the wedding, there is nothing for you to sign, nor will you receive any documents (even though you are legally married). You will not automatically receive an official copy of your Certificate of Marriage. You must apply for this with the Town Clerk or City Clerk where you applied for your license. There is usually a nominal charge for each copy. Officiants are not permitted to give you a copy. Instead, they are required (by law) to complete the Certificate of Marriage and mail it back to the Town Clerk or City Clerk from whom you obtained your license. I advise you to obtain a copy of your Certificate of Marriage now and file it away with your other important documents (such as your Birth Certificates). You may not need it for many years, but it will be good to know that you always have a ready copy, rather than having to retrieve it from the State of New Hampshire at some date in the future.

Residency Requirements

You do not have to be a resident of NH to apply for the license.

Time Frame and Jurisdiction

Before your ceremony, you must purchase a New Hampshire marriage license. It must be given to the officiant before your marriage is performed. While your license may be purchased up to ninety days before your ceremony, if it is not used in that time, it must be returned to the town clerk who issued the

license originally. Licenses are only valid for the state of New Hampshire, but are not restricted to town jurisdiction. Once approved, you can be married anywhere within the state lines.

Application for License Procedure and Identification Requirement

Both parties must appear together in person at any town or city clerk's office. Both parties must bring a type of photo identification that has their legal names and date of birth, such as a valid driver's license, state or military I.D. or passport. BLOOD TESTS ARE NO LONGER REQUIRED. WITNESSES ARE NOT REQUIRED.

Required Information

Along with basic information such as your full name, address, and social security number, race, be prepared to present your ancestry, years of education, date of birth, state of birth, and parent's full names and places of birth.

Previously Married

If either or both of parties have been previously married, you must bring proof of the marriage being dissolved. Accepted documents are a divorce decree, annulment papers, dissolution agreement, or the spouse's death certificate.

Under 18

Applicants who have reached the age of 18 can marry without parental consent, A female between the age of 13 and 17 years and a male between the age of 14 and 17 years can be married only with the permission of their parent (guardian) and a waiver. A female below the age of 13 and a male below the age of 14 are not allowed to marry under any conditions.

The above regulations on age apply to NH residents or to a non-resident who desires to marry a resident. If both parties are non-residents and are below the age of 18 they cannot be married in NH under any conditions.

Payment and Fees

There is a \$45, payable in bank check, money order or cash only, for the marriage license. certificates are available following the filing of the license by the person who officiated the ceremony. Cost for the certificate is \$12.00 for the first copy and \$8.00 for subsequent copies issued at the same time. The Justice of the Peace/Officiant cannot give you a copy of the marriage license.

Who Can Marry You In NH?

Any Justice of the Peace commissioned in the state or minister who lives within the state can perform the ceremony. If you wish to have another clergyman marry you, they must obtain a separate license from the state. New Hampshire does not allow lay people to perform marriages unless they are authorized to perform marriages within their own state. A special request must be filed with the state for this purpose.

New Hampshire Resident marrying Outside the Country

If any NH resident contracts a marriage or civil union in another jurisdiction that they were legally unable to contract in NH, (for example due to age, relation, etc.) the marriage or civil union would not be recognized by the State of NH. See RSA 457:43

How Do I Change My Name?

Name changes are done by the couple and usually require presenting a certified copy of the marriage certificate, which is available after the officiant (person performing the ceremony) files the marriage license with the city clerk. The certificate is presented to any agency where the name change would be recorded; social security, driver's licenses, creditors, etc.

I Don't Want My Name to Change, What Do I Do?

Nothing, Name changes take place only upon your request.