

Authorization to Celebrate Marriages in the DMV (District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia)

Each of our three jurisdictions has differing requirements regarding who is authorized to perform a civil marriage and how to obtain authorization to perform a civil marriage.

District of Columbia

The rules for marriage officiants in the District of Columbia are contained in section 46-406 of the D.C. Code, <http://dccode.org/simple/sections/46-406.html>. Ministers, priests, rabbis, or authorized persons of any religious denomination or society may officiate at weddings. An application and a \$35 fee is required. The application does not require any information from the presbytery, but the minister's signature on the application must be notarized. The [Officiant Application](#) or the [Temporary Officiant](#)

Maryland

In Maryland, any official of a religious order or body authorized by the rules and customs of that order or body to perform a marriage ceremony can officiate at a marriage ceremony. There is no application and no information needed from the religious body. The officiant must sign the marriage license, provide his or her title, and return it to the clerk of the court that issued the license. Maryland Code: [Laws - Statute Text](#)

Virginia

Getting authorization to officiate at a Virginia wedding is more complex and confusing. The law permits ministers to perform ceremonies: <https://vacode.org/20-23/>, but each county has different requirements.

Here, for example, is what Alexandria requires:

https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2024-09/minister_requirements_web.pdf

This is what Fairfax County requires: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/courts/circuit/pdf/20-23-va-clergy-ordained.pdf>. Additional information for Fairfax is here: [Marriage License Information | Circuit Court](#) and [Celebrant Information | Circuit Court](#)

And Loudoun County, for some reason, no longer accepts petitions to be a permanent civil celebrant: [Wedding Officiant | Loudoun County, VA - Official Website](#)

Here is information for Arlington County:

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Departments/Courts/Circuit-Court/Marriage>

It appears, however, that once one gets approval to officiate at a wedding from any county in Virginia the minister is authorized to perform civil marriage ceremonies in all counties in Virginia. So, an authorization from Fairfax County is sufficient to permit a minister to perform a marriage in Loudoun County.

In order to be authorized to perform marriage ceremonies in Virginia, ministers will have to get a letter of good standing from the presbytery and it may need to be notarized (which we can do in the NCP office). That request can be made through the stated clerk.