



DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
STATE VITAL RECORDS OFFICE

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Please Read

A message to the Bride and Groom regarding your Marriage Officiant

Wisconsin State Statute Chapter 765.16 provides that the following are authorized to be officiating persons:

- (1) Any ordained member of the clergy or any religious denomination or society who continues to be an ordained member of the clergy.
- (2) Any licentiate of a denominational body or an appointee of any bishop serving as the regular member of the clergy of any church of the denomination to which the member of the clergy belongs, if not restrained from so doing by the discipline of the church or denomination.
- (3) The 2 parties themselves, by mutual declaration that they take each other as husband and wife, in accordance with the customs, rules and regulations of any religious society, denomination or sect to which either of the parties may belong.
- (4) Any judge of a court of record or reserve judge appointed under s. 753.075.
- 5) Any circuit court commissioner appointed under ACR 75.02(1) or supplemental court commissioner appointed under s. 757.675(1).
- 6) Any municipal court judge.

An October 2005 Attorney General's opinion states:

“Ministers or clergy ordained or appointed through the “internet” may solemnize marriages if they meet the requirements either s. 765.16 or 765.17. The statute does not permit, and the Constitution of the United States may prohibit, inquiry into the method of ordination or appointment.”

The State requires that Officiants complete the marriage certificate correctly. The State will reject the certificate if not completed correctly. It is a legal document that you will use the rest of your life.

The title the Officiant places on the certificate should follow their religion or beliefs. They should refer to the religious denomination, sect or organization (including “internet” derived) they are representing to make the determination for title. The use of none, not applicable or fictitious Officiant titles such as Jedi Knight, etc. cannot be accepted. Abbreviations will **not** be accepted.

If the marriage certificate is questioned by any agency (social security, motor vehicle, military, or an insurance company) the burden of proof is on you. The State Vital Records Office and the County Offices cannot give legal advice.

Common sense needs to be exercised by the non-traditional marriage Officiants; they need to understand they are completing a legal document and it will be with you, the couple, the rest of your lives.

No Abbreviations. (This is worth repeating) Officiants should not use abbreviations. Certificates with abbreviations will not be accepted. Rev. Mis, SCC, etc. could mean many different things. It is the responsibility of the couple and the Officiant to be clear on this very important legal document.