

Marriage Officiant Q & A

1. **Who can perform marriage ceremonies in Louisiana?** An “officiant” is a person authorized to perform marriage ceremonies (La.R.S.9:201). The local Baptist church determines who it authorizes to perform marriage ceremonies (La.R.S. 9:202).
2. **Is licensure or ordination necessary to perform marriage ceremonies in Louisiana?** According to La.R.S. 9:202, “A marriage ceremony may be performed by...any clergyman...who is authorized by the authorities of his religion to perform marriages, and who is registered to perform marriages.” Baptist polity champions local church autonomy. The local Baptist church determines who it authorizes to perform marriage ceremonies. Churches are encouraged to adopt a written policy regarding who is authorized to perform marriage ceremonies. A sample policy is available on the Church Administration resource page at www.LouisianaBaptists.org/church-administration.
3. **How can I register to perform marriages? Officiants must be registered.** An affidavit stating your lawful name, denomination, and address must be deposited with the clerk of court of the parish in which you will principally perform marriage ceremonies (La.R.S. 9:204) or if you reside in Orleans Parish, with the office of the state registrar of vital records. You can download a copy of the affidavit at www.LouisianaBaptists.org/church-administration.
4. **What are officiants responsible to do in Louisiana?**
 - Register by submitting an affidavit prior to performing a marriage ceremony (La.R.S. 9:204)
 - Insure that a valid marriage license has been secured by the wedding parties (La.R.S. 9:205)
 - Insure that the marriage license has not expired (the ceremony must be conducted within 30 days of the issue date/time, La.R.S. 9:235). In the event that a license has expired, a new one can be issued by surrendering the expired license to the issuing clerk of court’s office (La.R.S. 9:236).
 - Insure that the marriage ceremony is not premature (at least 72 hours has lapsed since the license was issued, La.R.S. 9:241). The 72 hour delay may be waived by a judge under certain circumstances (La.R.S. 9:242).
 - Insure that two competent witnesses of full age are present and sign the license (La.R.S. 9:244)
 - Complete the license, give one copy to the married parties and file two copies with the issuing clerk of court (or state office of vital records for Orleans parish) within ten (10) days after the ceremony (La.R.S. 9:253)
5. **What can officiants be penalized for?**
 - Not filing the license within ten (10) days after the ceremony: not less than \$25 (first offense), not less than \$50 (second offense) and not less than \$100 AND loss of privilege to perform marriage ceremonies in Louisiana (third offense) (La.R.S. 9:254)
 - Making a false entry in the marriage certificate/license as to the time and date of the ceremony (not more than \$25) (La.R.S. 9:256)

If you have questions concerning conducting marriage ceremonies in Louisiana, please contact Stacy Morgan at 318.449.4293 or Stacy.Morgan@LouisianaBaptists.org.