Civil Unions: Questions and Answers
As of July 1, 2011, the State of Rhode Island enacted a law recognizing civil unions.

Who can apply for a civil union license?
Both individuals applying for the civil union license must be of the same sex and must be at least 18 years of age. Neither individual can be married or in a civil union with another person. The two individuals cannot be related to each other as defined in R.I. Gen. Laws Sections 15-1-1 or section 15-1-2. [15-3.1-2(4)]

What do I need to get a civil union license?
Both individuals applying for the civil union license must:
- Apply for the license in person at a city or town office (see section below on where to apply) and sign the license in the presence of the city or town clerk or his or her assistant.
- Present proof of birth facts and identification.
- If previously married or in a civil union, present a **certified copy** of the final decree of divorce or dissolution (with the raised or original stamped court seal) or a **certified copy** of the death certificate of the previous spouse/partner.

How much does a civil union license cost?
The cost for the license is $24.

Where do I apply for a civil union license?
Rhode Island residents can apply for a civil union license in the city or town of residence of either individual. Non-Rhode Island residents can apply for a civil union license in the city or town where the ceremony will take place.

How far in advance of the civil union ceremony do I need to get the license?
Once a civil union license is issued, it is valid for three months. The ceremony must occur during this three-month period. (If the ceremony does not end up taking place, the civil union license should be returned to the city or town where it was issued.)

Who can perform a civil union ceremony?
According to the General Laws of Rhode Island § 15-3.1-4, the following individuals can perform a civil union:
- Any ordained clergy or elder in good standing
- Any justice of the supreme court, superior court, family court, workers' compensation court, district court or traffic tribunal
- The clerk of the supreme court, any clerk or general chief clerk of a superior court, family court, district court, or traffic tribunal
- Magistrates, special or general magistrates of the superior court, family court, traffic tribunal or district court
- Administrators of the workers' compensation court and any former justice or judge and former administrator of these courts
- Any former chief clerk of the district court
- Any former clerk or general chief clerk of a superior court
- The secretary of the Senate
- Elected clerks of the General Assembly
- Any former secretary of the Senate or any former elected clerk of the General Assembly who retires after July 1, 2007.
- Judges of the United States appointed pursuant to Article III of the United States Constitution
- Bankruptcy judges appointed pursuant to Article I of the United States Constitution
- United States magistrate judges appointed pursuant to federal law
- Any justice and any former justice of the municipal courts of the cities and towns in the state
- The police court of the town of Johnston
- Any probate judge and any former probate judge
- Wardens of the town of New Shoreham may perform civil unions in New Shoreham
What does the official need to do?
The official must:

- Perform the ceremony
- Sign the appropriate official section of the civil union license in black ink only (no commercial correction products may be used)
- Obtain witnesses’ signatures on the civil union license in black ink only (no commercial correction products may be used).
- Register the civil union record within 96 hours with the city or town clerk where the license was issued. [15-3.1-4(3)]

Who can witness a civil union ceremony?
In addition to the official, the civil union must take place in the presence of two witnesses who are at least 18 years of age.

Are there different types of civil union ceremonies?
There are two types of civil union ceremonies. The ceremony is considered to be a religious ceremony if it is officiated by an ordained member of the clergy or by an elder in good standing. The ceremony is considered to be a civil ceremony if it is officiated by an approved official other than an ordained member of the clergy or an elder in good standing.

Who can correct information on a civil union license after it is registered?
The State Office of Vital Records can correct information on a civil union license. The State Office of Vital Records is located at the Department of Health Cannon Building, 3 Capitol Hill, room 101, Providence. The office is open Monday through Friday, 12:30 – 4:00 p.m.