

What is the difference between a certified and an uncertified copy of a marriage certificate?

In Wisconsin, a **certified** copy of a marriage certificate may be issued by either the Register of Deeds office or the State Vital Records Office. It will have a raised seal and will be printed on security paper.

A certified copy of the marriage certificate is required to change your last name or obtain benefits.

State law restricts who may obtain a **certified** copy of a marriage certificate. A certified copy may be issued to:

- The bride and groom named on the certificate;
- A parent or legal custodian of the bride or groom named on the certificate;
- A brother or sister of the bride or groom named on the certificate;
- A current spouse of the bride or groom (spouse's former marriage);
- A child of the bride and/or groom named on the certificate;
- A grandparent of the bride or groom named on the certificate;
- A person authorized in writing by one of the above (The written and signed authorization must accompany the request and the relationship of the authorizing party to the subject of the record must be clearly explained.); or
- A person who can demonstrate that the certificate is required to determine or to protect a personal or property right.

If you do not meet one of the above criteria, you cannot receive a certified copy of a marriage certificate.

An **uncertified** copy of a marriage certificate will contain the same information as a certified copy but will be issued on plain paper without a seal. It will **not** be acceptable for legal purposes, such as reporting a name change due to marriage or claiming insurance benefits.
