How Old Do I Have to be to Get Married?

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Generally, each person must be at least 18 years old to get married. However, sometimes 15, 16 and 17 year olds can marry.

Parental Consent

People who are 17 can get married if the person who is 17 gets consent from the parents or guardian the person who has legal custody or control over a minor. Usually, the under-age person needs the consent of both parents. If the under-age person has a legally appointed guardian, then that guardian needs to consent (not the parents).

Only one parent needs to consent if:

- that parent has court-ordered custody of the under-age person;
- the other parent is deceased;
- the other parent has abandoned the under-age person;
- the other parent is physically or mentally incompetent to provide consent; or
- the whereabouts of the other parent are unknown.

If only one parent signs the consent because of one of the above reasons, the consent must explain why only one parent is required to sign.

The consent must be signed and verified swear or affirm in writing that the information is correct in front of the court clerk. So the parent(s) or legal guardian must go with the under-age person to the clerk’s office to sign the consent.

Court order authorizing the issuance of a marriage license

People who are 15 or 16 can get married if the under-age person gets consent as explained above AND gets a court order allowing the clerk to issue a marriage license. The court will grant such an order if the two people who want to marry are the parents of a child or are expecting a baby. The persons who want to marry would need to file a petition in the circuit court explaining that they are 15 or 16, that the female is pregnant or a mother, that the male is the father of the
child, and that they have received the required consent. The court will then give notice to the parents of the persons who want to marry and will have a hearing. After the hearing, the court can then allow the clerk to issue a marriage license.

What if I am under 18, but my parent won’t consent to my marriage?

People who are 15-17 but can’t get consent from their parents can ask the court to authorize the marriage. The court can authorize a marriage without consent of the parents if the court finds there is good reason to do so. The persons who want to marry can make a written or a verbal petition to the court. The court will then consider all of the facts. If the court finds there is good reason for the marriage and the marriage would be in the best interest of all people involved, the court can order the clerk to issue a marriage license.

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