Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 641—Chapter 98
"Marriage Registration"

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 144 and 595

State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code sections 144.12, 144.16, 331.605(1)"f" and "g," 595.2(4), 595.4, 595.5, 595.10, and 595.16

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

December 16, 2025 10 a.m.	Microsoft Teams Meeting ID: 264 358 640 097 83 Passcode: V95vw7re

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department of Health and Human Services no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

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Purpose and Summary

This proposed rulemaking was undertaken in accordance with Executive Order 10. The purpose of this proposed chapter is to describe the administration process for marriage registration, including license application, filing the certificate, recordkeeping, certified copies, and fees. As a result of the review, the Department revised the chapter, removing restrictive terms and making minor wording changes.

Analysis of Impact

1. **Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:**

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Most who are married in Iowa will bear the costs in the form of fees associated with marriage licenses.

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

Most who are married in Iowa will benefit from this proposed rulemaking.

2. **Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:**

- **Quantitative description of impact:**

Marriage license fees are $35. The Department's Vital Records program records around 17,000 marriages in the State annually. The vital records fees collected not only fund the Department's Health Statistics Bureau but also contribute to the State's General Fund. For FY 2025 (through August 11,

2025), the Department collected over $3.7 million and contributed over $1.8 million to the General Fund. This includes fees collected for all vital records and not just marriages.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

This proposed chapter describes the administration process for marriage registration, including license application, filing the certificate, recordkeeping, certified copies, and fees.

3. **Costs to the State:**

- **Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:**

The Department incurs personnel and other administrative costs associated with this proposed chapter.

- **Anticipated effect on State revenues:**

The vital records fees collected not only fund the Department's Health Statistics Bureau but also contribute to the State's General Fund. For FY 2025 (through August 11, 2025), the Department collected over $3.7 million and contributed over $1.8 million to the General Fund. This includes fees collected for all vital records and not just marriages.

4. **Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:**

Rulemaking is required by Iowa Code chapter 144.

5. **Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:**

Not applicable.

6. **Alternative methods considered by the agency:**

- **Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:**

Not applicable.

- **Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:**

Rulemaking is required by Iowa Code chapter 144.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking's compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

This proposed rulemaking has no impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Rescind 641—Chapter 98 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 98
MARRIAGE REGISTRATION

641—98.1(144,595) Definitions. For the purpose of this chapter, the definitions in 641—Chapter 95 apply.

641—98.2(144,595) Forms—property of department. All forms, certificates and reports pertaining to the registration of a marriage are the property of the department and shall be surrendered to the state registrar upon demand.

98.2(1) The forms supplied or approved for reporting a marriage will be used for official purposes as provided for by statute, rules and instructions of the state registrar.

98.2(2) No forms, except those furnished or approved by the state registrar, can be used in the reporting of a marriage or the making of copies of vital records.

641—98.3(144,595) Standard registration of marriage—up to one year. A marriage event that takes place in Iowa shall be prepared on the standard Certificate of Marriage form and submitted for registration within one year from the date of marriage.

98.3(1) Prior to marriage, the applicants shall:

a. Obtain an Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form from the county registrar;

b. Submit to the county registrar the completed application and fee pursuant to Iowa Code section 331.605; and

c. Receive a license to marry in Iowa and a Certificate of Marriage form from the county registrar.

98.3(2) Once the marriage is solemnized, the completed certificate of marriage will be filed with the county registrar where the license to marry was issued. The county registrar will then forward the certificate of marriage to the state registrar for filing.

641—98.4(144,595) Application for a license to marry in Iowa.

98.4(1) The Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form is available from any county registrar. The applicants are the parties to be married.

98.4(2) The application will not be processed until all items on the form, including the affidavit of a competent and disinterested person, have been completed. The affidavit shall be completed and signed in front of a notary public by an individual of legal age who is acquainted with both applicants who plan to marry. A family member may serve as the competent and disinterested person.

98.4(3) Each applicant shall verify the personal information by notarized signature.

98.4(4) If an applicant is 16 or 17 years of age, the Certificate of Consent of Underage Party to Marry form shall be completed in accordance with Iowa Code section 595.2(4) and shall be approved by a judge in the county's judicial district before the application for a marriage license may be accepted by the county registrar. Persons 15 years of age or younger may not marry in Iowa.

98.4(5) The Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form shall be signed in front of a notary public by both parties to be married and their competent and disinterested person. By signature, the applicants and their competent and disinterested person are attesting that the applicants are:

a. Eighteen years of age or older or, if either or both are 16 or 17 years of age, that they have provided a signed Certificate of Consent of Underage Party to Marry form;

b. Competent to enter into a civil contract pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.1A;

c. Not legally married to each other and that neither is legally married to someone else who is living; and

d. Acknowledging that they have provided accurate information on the application form.

98.4(6) An applicant is not required to be a U.S. citizen.

98.4(7) The Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form shall be submitted to the registrar in the county where the application and marriage certificate are to be filed. The marriage license is valid in any county in Iowa.

98.4(8) A fee is due upon the submittal of a completed Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form pursuant to Iowa Code section 331.605(1)*"g."*

98.4(9) At the time of completion of the Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form, the applicants shall indicate the adoption of the legal name to be used after marriage pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.5(1). When the application is filed, the county registrar will enter the legal name on the License to Marry in Iowa form and the original Certificate of Marriage form. Once the application is filed, any changes to the legal name to be adopted shall only be made prior to the marriage by reapplication and repayment of the application fee unless it can be proven that an obvious typographical error was made when the license or the certificate was prepared. An individual shall have only one legal name at any one time pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.5(2).

98.4(10) The original certificate of marriage will not later be modified to reflect a court-ordered legal change of name.

641—98.5(144,595) License to marry.

98.5(1) Upon receipt and acceptance of a completed Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form, the county registrar may issue the license to marry. When the marriage license valid date is computed, the day of application will be excluded. The license will become valid after the expiration of three calendar days after the date of application to marry.

98.5(2) The three-day waiting period may be waived by a district judge in the county's judicial district pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.4. An Application for Waiver of 3-Day Waiting Period form is available from the county registrar. If the waiver is granted, the county registrar will collect the $5 fee for the waiver pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.4.

98.5(3) When a license is issued, the county registrar will provide the applicant the Certificate of Marriage form and provide instructions to ensure the return of a complete and accurate certificate of marriage for filing.

98.5(4) If the license to marry in Iowa is not retrieved from the county registrar within six months from the date of application, the application is void.

98.5(5) The license to marry is proof that proper application to marry in Iowa has been made. The parties to be married shall present the license to the person who will solemnize the marriage pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.10.

641—98.6(144,595) Certificate of marriage.

98.6(1) At the time the license to marry in Iowa is issued, the county registrar will also prepare the original copy of the Certificate of Marriage form. The person solemnizing the marriage shall complete the blank items pertaining to the marriage ceremony and obtain the required signatures.

98.6(2) All participants in the marriage ceremony shall be present at the same time and location within the geographic boundaries of the state of Iowa, including the parties to be married, two witnesses and the officiant. Marriage ceremonies shall not occur by proxy, telephone, or other electronic means.

98.6(3) After the marriage ceremony:

a. The parties married shall sign, at a minimum, their first and last legal name on the Certificate of Marriage form as indicated on the Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form; and

b. Two witnesses present at the ceremony and the officiant shall sign and print their names on the Certificate of Marriage form in the spaces provided. If there is more than one officiant, the signature and name of only one of the officiants shall be on the Certificate of Marriage form.

98.6(4) Photocopies of the certificate of marriage are prohibited prior to registration of the certificate with the county registrar. The officiant shall not affix any kind of seal to the certificate of marriage.

98.6(5) Within 15 days after the marriage ceremony, the officiant who solemnized the marriage shall file for registration the certificate of marriage with the county registrar that issued the marriage license, except as directed pursuant to Iowa Code section 595.16.

98.6(6) Upon registration of the certificate of marriage, the completed Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form becomes part of the record of marriage, including the granted three-day waiver and accepted consent to marriage of a minor, if applicable.

98.6(7) Original certificates of marriage registered by the county registrar shall be forwarded to the state registrar weekly or as directed by the state registrar.

641—98.7(144,595) Delayed registration of marriage—one year or more after date of event. All Iowa marriages registered one year or more after the date of the marriage shall be prepared on the Delayed Certificate of Marriage form. The state registrar will require documentary evidence to establish the facts of the marriage pursuant to Iowa Code section 144.16 and subrule 98.7(2). The delayed marriage record will be registered and maintained solely at the state registrar's office.

98.7(1) *Application.* A completed Delayed Certificate of Marriage form shall be signed before a notary by both parties to the marriage and filed with the state registrar.

98.7(2) *Facts to be established.*

a. The applicant shall submit a notification of record search certified by the state registrar that shall indicate that no prior certificate of marriage is on file for the persons whose delayed marriage record is to be filed. The notification of record search will be returned to the applicant and will not be exchanged for a certified copy of a delayed certificate of marriage.

b. The applicant shall substantiate the following with documentary evidence:

(1) The county in Iowa where the license to marry was issued;

(2) The full name of the registrants before and after the marriage;

(3) The date and place of the marriage in Iowa;

(4) The full names of the registrants' parents;

(5) The full names of the two witnesses present at the marriage ceremony; and

(6) The full name and address of the officiant who performed the marriage ceremony.

98.7(3) *Documentary evidence.*

a. To be acceptable for purposes of registration by the state registrar, the delayed certificate of marriage must be supported by:

(1) All of the following:

1. A copy of the issued license to marry in Iowa or the completed Application for a License to Marry in Iowa form secured from the county registrar in the county where the license to marry was issued;

2. A notarized affidavit from two witnesses to the wedding ceremony attesting to the facts of the marriage; and

3. A certified copy transcribed from the official records where the marriage was performed, including the date and place of such marriage as attested to by the custodian of such records; or

(2) An affidavit of the person who performed the ceremony documenting that there was a marriage and the date and place of such marriage.

b. The state registrar may require additional documentary evidence to prove the facts of the marriage event.

98.7(4) *Abstraction and certification by the state registrar.* The state registrar will abstract on the Delayed Certificate of Marriage form a description of each document submitted to support the facts of the marriage event. This abstract will include:

a. The title, description and signatory from each document presented;

b. The date of the original filing of the document being abstracted; and

c. The facts of the marriage event as established pursuant to paragraph 98.7(2)*"b."*

98.7(5) *Acceptance of documentary evidence for registration.* All documents submitted in support of the delayed registration will be returned to the applicant after review, abstraction, and registration. The state registrar will by signature certify that:

a. No prior certificate of marriage is on file for the registrants;

b. The evidence has been reviewed and substantiates the facts of the marriage event; and

c. The abstract of the evidence appearing on the delayed certificate of marriage accurately reflects the nature and content of the document.

98.7(6) *Denial of registration.* In the absence of adequate substantiating evidence or if the state registrar finds reason to question the validity or adequacy of the evidence required to establish a delayed certificate of marriage, the state registrar will not register the delayed record.

a. The written notice of rejection from the state registrar will include:

(1) The Delayed Certificate of Marriage form stamped "rejected"; and

(2) The Delayed Evidence Refusal form.

b. Applications for delayed certificates that have not been completed within one year from the date of application may be dismissed at the discretion of the state registrar. Upon dismissal, the state registrar will advise the applicant, and all documents submitted in support of such registration will be returned to the applicant. The state registrar will provide information related to the applicant's right of appeal to the district court.

c. If a request to establish a delayed certificate of marriage is rejected under the provisions of Iowa Code section 144.16, a petition may be filed with the district court for an order to establish a delayed certificate of marriage. The petition shall:

(1) Be made on a form prescribed and furnished by the state registrar.

(2) Allege that diligent efforts by the petitioner have failed to obtain the evidence required in accordance with Iowa Code section 144.16.

(3) Allege that the state registrar has refused to establish the delayed certificate of marriage.

(4) Include such other allegations as may be required.

(5) Be accompanied by a statement of the registration official made in accordance with Iowa Code section 144.16 and all documentary evidence that was submitted to the registration official in support of such registration.

(6) Be verified by the petitioner.

98.7(7) *Duties of county registrar.* The county registrar may assist the applicant in the completion and notarization of the delayed form, excluding the portion restricted for state use only. The county registrar may forward the partially completed delayed form, documents and fees to the state registrar for final review and possible acceptance.

98.7(8) *Fees.* Administrative and certified copy fees shall be charged as provided in rule 641—95.6(144).

641—98.8(144,595) Dissolution of marriage or annulment.

98.8(1) The completed Report of Dissolution of Marriage or Annulment form shall be filed with the clerk of district court within one month from the date of the dissolution of marriage or annulment and be prepared on the official paper issued by the state registrar by one of the following means:

a. Use of a typewriter using a dark blue or black ribbon on the standard form of the report;

b. Use of a computer program that is preapproved by the state registrar;

c. Use of an electronic form prescribed by the state registrar; or

d. As directed by the state registrar.

98.8(2) If an attorney or clerk of district court uses a computer software program to generate a Report of Dissolution of Marriage or Annulment form, the form will be reviewed by the state registrar for approval. The state registrar will deny approval if the form does not conform to the standard Report of Dissolution of Marriage or Annulment form as prescribed.

98.8(3) Clerks of district court shall submit reports of dissolution of marriage or annulment to the state registrar weekly or as directed by the state registrar.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 144.12, 144.16, 331.605(1)*"f"* and *"g,"* 595.2(4), 595.4, 595.5, 595.10, and 595.16.