Rhode Island Electronic Notarization Guide

WHAT IS ELECTRONIC NOTARIZATION?

Electronic notarization is a notarial act performed on a digital document. The same rules, requirements and elements of paper-based notarizations apply to electronic notarizations.

The signer and notary must both physically be in each other's presence in Rhode Island.

When electronic notarization is performed by a Rhode Island notary public they must be registered to perform electronic acts on or involving an electronic record using a tamper-evident technology approved by the Rhode Island Department of State.

A notary public performing electronic notarization in Rhode Island must read and comply with the RI Electronic Notarization Standards and the requirements of R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 42-30.1.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Before performing your first electronic notarization, you must do the following:

1. Apply or renew as a traditional RI commissioned notary public;

2. Read and understand the RI Electronic Notarization Standards;

3. Contact one of the approved solution providers listed on our website and obtain their services for electronic notarizations;

4. Complete any training provided by the selected solution provider;

5. Register with the RI Department of State Notary Division to perform notarizations electronically by completing and submitting the Notary Public Information Update form along with a copy of your digital stamp and digital signature issued by the solution provider; and

6. Await confirmation from the RI Department of State via email before notarizing electronically.

The notary's electronic signature and stamp must be used only to perform electronic notarial acts. Performing an electronic notarization without registering with the RI Department of State Notary Division will invalidate the notarization as registration is required prior to performing electronic notarial acts.

HOW TO PERFORM ELECTRONIC NOTARIZATION

Once you receive a confirmation email from the RI Department of State stating you have been approved to become an electronic notary, you may begin. The RI notary and the signer must be in each other's presence at the time of the notarial ceremony. Follow the steps listed below to successfully perform an electronic notarization.

1. The document signer and notary are both physically in the same room.

2. The signer provides the electronic copy of their document to the notary.

3. The notary positively identifies the signer using an acceptable form of ID. The signer must provide an ID in physical form just as they would for a paper-based notarial ceremony.

4. The notary screens the signer for willingness and competency.

5. The notary reviews the document to determine the type of notarial act requested.

6. The notary and document signer gather around the notary's computer.

7. The signer signs the document on the computer using an electronic signature.

8. The notary signs and completes the notarial certificate and attaches it to the document through the electronic application.

9. The notary affixes their electronic notary stamp.

10. The notary completes the electronic journal entry.

11. The notarized document is sent to the signer or designated party/parties who may then download or transmit the document.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is Electronic Notarization the same as Remote Online Notarization?

Both Remote Online Notarization and Electronic Notarization are processes by which documents are notarized in a digital form using tamper-evident technology. Remote Online Notarization accomplishes this by allowing a signer who is not in the presence of the notary to communicate with the notary usuing audio-video technology. Electronic Notarization involves the notary and signer physically being in each other's presence.

Do I need training or have to take a test?

You do not have to take a test; however, you must read the RI Electronic Notarization Standards and complete any training provided by the solution provider you select before notarizing electronically.

Can I electronically notarize a paper document?

No, electronic notarization is for digital documents only. Since the notary and signer must physically be in each other's presence, the notary can perform a paper-based notarial ceremony as usual.

Do the notary and the signer have to be in each other's presence?

Yes, a notary public should not perform an electronic notarization if the document signer does not physically appear in person before them at the time of the electronic notarization.

Can I charge my customers more for an electronic notarization?

The maximum fee for any notarial act is $25, whether the notarization is performed on paper or on electronic documents.