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Florida Bar Board Certification
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Florida Board Certified Lawyers on LinkedIn
Evaluated for Professionalism and Tested for Expertise

ALL ATTORNEY ADVERTISING, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION MUST COMPLY WITH
RULES REGULATING THE FLORIDA BAR SUBCHAPTER 4-7 INFORMATION ABOUT LEGAL SERVICES.

Promoting Board Certification: Talking Points

Describe the Florida Bar's lawyer certification program.

- Certification is a voluntary program for lawyers, approved by The Florida Supreme Court and administered by The Florida Bar. The program began in 1982 to help the public choose lawyers.
- Certified attorneys are the only lawyers allowed to use the terms specialist, or B.C.S. for Board Certified Specialist when referring to their legal credentials.
- The Florida Bar evaluates all certified lawyers for experience and expertise in a particular area of law and professionalism and ethics in the practice of law. Our slogan is, "Evaluated for Professionalism, Tested for Expertise."
- A lawyer who is a member in good standing of The Florida Bar and who meets the standards prescribed by the state's Supreme Court may become board certified in one or more of the 27 certification fields.
- Certification is the highest level of evaluation by The Florida Bar of the competency and experience of attorneys in the areas of law approved for certification.
- The Florida Bar offers the greatest number of specialties (27) of any state in the U.S.

What does it mean to be certified?

- Board certified lawyers have a minimum of five years in law practice.
- Certified lawyers must show substantial involvement in the field of law for which certification is sought.
- They must receive a passing grade on the examination required of all applicants or meet strict criteria to exempt the exam before officially earning board certification; each specialty has a different exam.
- Certified lawyers must satisfy a peer review assessment of their competence in the specialty field plus character, ethics and professionalism in the practice of law.
- Certified lawyers must satisfy the certification area's continuing legal education requirements.
- Board certification is valid for five years, during which time the attorney must continue to practice law and attend Florida Bar-approved continuing legal education courses. To be recertified, lawyers must meet requirements similar to those for initial certification.

How does the certification program help a client or potential client?

- Board certified lawyers' experience and competency have been rigorously evaluated, and Florida lawyers are allowed to refer to themselves as board certified specialists or to use the letters B.C.S. to indicate Board Certified Specialist when referring to their legal credentials.
- Board certified lawyers have met The Florida Bar's highest standards for special knowledge, skills and proficiency in various areas of law and professionalism and ethics in the practice of law.

How many lawyers are certified in Florida?

- Seven percent of eligible Florida Bar members – approximately 5,181 lawyers – have earned board certification in one or more of the 27 specialty areas.

What are the areas of Florida Bar board certification?

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|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Adoption Law | Construction Law | International Litigation & Arbitration |
| Admiralty & Maritime Law | Criminal Appellate | Juvenile Law |
| Antitrust & Trade Regulation Law | Criminal Trial | Labor & Employment Law |
| Appellate Practice | Education Law | Marital & Family Law |
| Aviation Law | Elder Law | Real Estate |
| Business Litigation | Health Law | State and Federal Government and Administrative Practice |
| City, County & Local Government Law | Immigration & Nationality | Tax Law |
| Civil Trial | Intellectual Property Law | Wills, Trusts & Estates |
| Condominium and Planned Development | International Law | Workers' Compensation |

What advice can you give someone who is looking for a lawyer?

- Make a list of lawyers who may be qualified; ask family, friends and co-workers for references
- Contact The Florida Bar's Lawyer Referral Service or local bar association lawyer referral services listed in the Yellow Pages. These services are designed to assist consumers in contacting lawyers.
- The Florida Bar provides referrals to attorneys who will conduct an initial half-hour office consultation for \$25 in 47 of the 67 counties in Florida. Consumers can access the service by calling (800) 342-8011 weekdays 8:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. or by visiting The Florida Bar's Web site at www.FloridaBar.org.
- Before scheduling an appointment with a lawyer, call to ask a few questions, such as:
 - Does the lawyer have experience with the type of problem?
 - Does the lawyer charge for an initial interview? How much?
 - If the problem is routine, is there a standard fee? What does it cover?
 - Is there a written agreement describing the services provided for the fee?
- Write down all the information and compare answers. Make an appointment with the lawyer whose answers seem most satisfactory.
- Discuss fees in advance and have a fee agreement put in writing.

How do I know a lawyer is certified?

- The Florida Bar allows certified lawyers to use the term "board certified specialist." Florida Bar board certified lawyers may also use the letters "B.C.S." behind their names to indicate "Board Certified Specialist," and the area(s) in which the member is board certified must be identified. If the "B.C.S." letters are used in court documents or non-advertising contexts, the initials may stand alone.
- Certified lawyers may use a logo that says, "The Florida Bar, Board Certified" on their letterhead, business cards or in advertisements. Logos are available for each specialty field of practice. However, if a lawyer uses The Florida Bar's generic board certification logo, the logo should be accompanied by the specialty field.

Examples

John Q. Smith
Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer

John Q. Smith
Marital & Family Law Specialist

John Q. Smith, B.C.S.
Appellate Practice

