



Promoting Board Certification: Talking Points FloridaBar.org/certification

➤ 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 identify or advertise themselves as "Florida Bar Board Certified," as specialists or experts.
- Certification establishes standards for a lawyer's education and competency; The Florida Bar grants board certification only to lawyers who have demonstrated experience and expertise in a particular area of law.
- 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 22 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.

➤ 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; 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, requirements similar to those for initial certification must be met.

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

- Certification gives the person seeking a lawyer objective information regarding a lawyer's qualifications:
 - Certified lawyers are specialists who meet Florida's high legal standards
 - Certification indicates legal expertise; board-certified lawyers are dedicated to professional excellence
- Board-certified lawyers exemplify the high standards The Florida Bar sets for all of its members.

➤ How many lawyers are certified in Florida?

- More than 4,300 lawyers are certified in Florida.

➤ **What are the areas of certification?**

- Admiralty & Maritime Law
- Antitrust & Trade Regulation Law
- Appellate Practice
- Aviation Law
- Business Litigation
- City, County & Local Government Law
- Civil Trial
- Construction Law
- Criminal Appellate
- Criminal Trial
- Elder Law
- Health Law
- Immigration & Nationality
- Intellectual Property Law
- International Law
- Labor & Employment Law
- Marital & Family Law
- Real Estate
- State and Federal Government and Administrative Practice
- Tax Law
- Wills, Trusts & Estates
- 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. Consumers can access the service by calling (800) 342-8011 weekdays 8 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.

➤ **As a consumer, why is lawyer certification important?**

- Choosing a lawyer is a very important decision.
- Certification gives people one way to make more informed decisions when selecting a lawyer.

➤ **How do I know a lawyer is certified?**

- The Florida Bar only allows certified lawyers to use the terms "Board Certified," "specialist" and "expert."
- Certified lawyers may use a logo that says, "The Florida Bar, Board Certified" on their letterhead, business cards or in advertisements.