

# PROMOTING BOARD CERTIFICATION TALKING POINTS



## DESCRIBE THE FLORIDA BAR BOARD CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

- Board certification is a voluntary program for lawyers, officiated by The Florida Supreme Court and administered by The Florida Bar. The program began in 1982 to help the public select lawyers who are distinguished in particular areas of law.
- The Florida Bar thoroughly evaluates all board-certified lawyers for credibility 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 Florida Supreme Court may begin the process of becoming board-certified in one or more of the 27 certification areas.
- Established by the Florida Supreme Court, board certification is conferred upon lawyers by the most credible and highest authority over the state’s legal community, The Florida Bar.
- Board certification is Florida’s official, independent determination of a lawyer’s expertise to practice in a specialty field of law. It is the gold standard for Florida lawyers, representing a recognition by a lawyer’s peers that they have attained a level of professional expertise in their chosen fields.
- More than 100,000 lawyers are eligible to practice law in Florida ... with more entering the field each year. As the legal landscape grows increasingly competitive, board-certified lawyers use their status to set themselves apart from peers.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BOARD CERTIFIED?

- Board-certified lawyers have dedicated themselves to achieving a heightened level of excellence through character, professionalism, ethics, and credibility in the practice of law.
- Lawyers must practice law for at least five years before becoming eligible to start the board certification process.
- Board-certified lawyers must demonstrate substantial involvement in the area of law in which certification is sought.
- Lawyers applying for board certification must pass a comprehensive examination that evaluates a high level of knowledge, skills, and expertise in a specialty field.
- Board-certified lawyers undergo a rigorous peer-review process that assesses competence in a specialty field, as well as professionalism and ethics in the practice of law.

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



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# PROMOTING BOARD CERTIFICATION TALKING POINTS, CONTINUED

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BOARD CERTIFIED, CONT.

- Board-certified lawyers must satisfy the certification area’s continuing legal education requirements, which are more robust than what The Florida Bar requires attorneys to satisfy for continued licensure in the general practice of law.
- 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.
- Recent research shows that lawyers who list themselves as “board-certified” in a specialized area of law are 25% to 40% more likely to be hired than a nonboard-certified counterpart with similar credentials.

## HOW DOES THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM HELP A CLIENT OR POTENTIAL CLIENT?

- When retaining a board-certified lawyer, you get specialized expertise, professionalism & ethics, credibility, and dedication to a heightened level of excellence in a legal specialization.
- Board-certified lawyers’ experience and competency have been rigorously evaluated, giving clients assurance that their legal representative exhibits a heightened level of proficiency in one or more specialized areas of law.
- Clients can more readily locate board-certified lawyers because only Florida attorneys who attain this distinction 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.
- Because attorneys are not eligible for board certification until they have practiced law for at least five years, potential clients know these attorneys have a specified level of experience.

## HOW MANY LAWYERS ARE CERTIFIED IN FLORIDA?

As of 2021, 7% of eligible Florida Bar members – fewer than 5,500 lawyers – have earned board certification in one or more of the 27 specialty areas.

## HOW DO I KNOW A LAWYER IS BOARD CERTIFIED?

The Florida Bar allows board-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 nonadvertising contexts, the initials may stand alone.

Certified lawyers may use a logo that says, “The Florida Bar, Board Certified” on their letterhead and 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 specialty field must be included in text. See examples at right.

