

Certified Attorney Specialists

What is a certified attorney specialist?

All attorneys licensed to practice law in Ohio must have graduated from an accredited law school and passed an intensive examination. In addition, they must attend continuing legal education courses as required by the Supreme Court of Ohio. Some attorneys who devote a large part of their practice to a particular area of the law may choose to go beyond these requirements to earn specialty certification. To become a certified specialist, an attorney must:

- demonstrate substantial and continuing involvement in a particular field of law;
- submit references from other lawyers and judges attesting to their competency in the specialty area;
- attend intermediate or advanced continuing legal education courses in the specialty area in addition to the courses required of all attorneys;
- remain in good standing with the Supreme Court of Ohio;
- maintain minimum professional liability insurance coverage; and
- pass a written examination in the specialty area.

Attorneys who have earned a specialty certification must be re-certified at least every four to seven years and must report annually to the certifying agency.

Who certifies attorneys as specialists?

The Supreme Court of Ohio Commission on Certification of Attorneys as Specialists accredits non-profit organizations to certify Ohio attorneys as specialists. The organizations undergo rigorous and continuous review for compliance with the standards established for certification. The Ohio State Bar Association (OSBA) is the largest certifying agency in Ohio.

What areas of the law has the Supreme Court of Ohio approved as specialty areas?

The areas of law approved for specialty certification include:

- Administrative agency law
- Appellate law
- Business and consumer bankruptcy law
- Commercial and residential real property law
- Civil trial advocacy
- Creditors' rights/debt collection law
- Criminal trial advocacy
- Elder law
- Estate planning, trust and probate law
- Family relations law
- Federal taxation law
- Labor and employment law
- Workers' compensation law

Some of these areas may not yet have accredited specialty programs available, and some have been combined. Other fields of law may be added to the Supreme Court's list in the future.

How do I know if an attorney is a certified specialist?

Look for a special designation such as "certified by the Ohio State Bar Association" or another agency on business cards, letterhead, or in advertising. (*See logo below.*) You may also want to ask attorneys you contact if they are certified specialists. Attorneys are not permitted to state that they are specialists in an area of law unless they have been certified in that area.

How do I find a certified attorney specialist?

If you already have a relationship with an attorney, talk to that attorney about your legal needs and ask if you should speak with a specialist. You can also find a list of attorney specialists on the OSBA Web site at <http://www.ohioabar.org/memrsrc/?articleid=57>.

You may also contact the Supreme Court of Ohio at <http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/CCAS/default.asp>.

